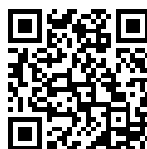


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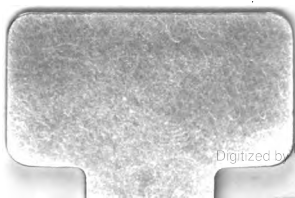
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# THE DEAR GIRL.

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "NEVER FORGOTTEN," "THE SECOND MRS. TILLOTSON,"  
ETC. ETC.

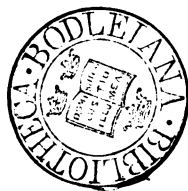
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"Les sens peuvent s'appréhender et les idées être en désaccord;  
au contraire, souvent les caractères s'accordent et les personnes se déplaisent."

BALZAC, *Ursule Mirouet*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.



LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 18, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1868.

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250. v. 85.



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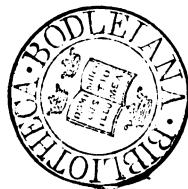
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*Inscribed*

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE COUNTESS OF CHARLEMONT.



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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It may be right to mention, that the following story will be found to differ materially, both in length and treatment, from the shape in which it was presented to readers of *All the Year Round*. To admit of its being completed within four months to suit the arrangements of the journal, entailed the rejection of a great many smaller episodes and characters.



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# THE DEAR GIRL.



## PROLOGUE.



## PROLOGUE.

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ON a certain dark night, and in a line of travellers making for the port, we are beating up after hand-carts of luggage to where the night-packet is waiting round the corner, tuning a mournful ditty, steam blowing off. It is a rueful procession; the tumbrils and lanterns give it all the air of an execution.

As we turn the corner, the wind comes thundering in from the sea; the white steam is borne fiercely towards us, and, at the same moment, is seen a bright blaze of light as from a gigantic lantern, the bow-window of the inn; cheerful, warm, encouraging,

with the table set out, and the waiters standing to attention, with their napkins at the "present."

It was too inviting, and not to be resisted. One traveller at least, fell out of the ranks, and let the procession move on to execution. *They* had their night of horror, groans, creaking, pounding of angry seas, and cribbed and cabined horror and confusion; we, the bright cheerful inn, the pleasant repast, the brightest of bedchambers, the snowiest of beds, and lightest of slumbers. Pleasant night—gentle fatigue of travel always acceptable—and grateful repose!

Suddenly, into the very heart of tranquil dreams of home, and such far-off pictures, and soft faces, intrudes a riotous confusion and hurly-burly, like the soldiers in the Days of Terror bursting in on some proscribed family at their prayers. The sun was streaming in at the large bow-window, over the lower one we had seen last night; the clatter of tongues came pouring in with

it, making wild havoc with the delicate network of Queen Mab.

I look out. It is the brightest, gaudiest of mornings. The sun is shining; all the fishing-boats have come in; and below, under the window, are masts and rigging, and fish glittering like crystal or silver, and gay dresses, red petticoats, mahogany-coloured faces, and old men in nightcaps, who seem carved in the ivory-work speciality of the place,—all set off with a shouting and vending from casks and a wild flourishing of blue-worsted arms. From the bow-window I see the little port as background, rescued from low-lying sandbanks, as if scooped out with egg-spoons, with the neat, small painstaking of the French in such matters; a brig or two opposite, lying under shelter of the poor-looking hills, stripped as old trunks; and a little to the left, the regular semicircle of timber paling—the avenue of wickerwork, as it seems—the entry to every French port.

This is Dieppe ; but Dieppe in March, long before the season. We must wait all that day—an enforced stay ; and I wander about, and see the gay and fashionable creature in a déshabille dressing-gown, curl-papers even, and nightcap. She looks sallow and plain without her rouge and feathers. There, round the corner, facing the sea, are the grand hotels—*The Royal*, *The English*, and what not, all shut up ; and the lone lorn Etablissement, shabby, dingy, faded—like an abandoned circus.

The sea is fresh and inviting, the sands smooth, but there is no one to bathe. There are no beauties, no toilettes, no gay carriages. I am nearly the only stranger in the place ; yet, as I walk about through the cheerful streets, and past the gay little shops—now by the Grand Place, where Captain Duquesne, all bronze hat and feathers, struts and flaunts and defies the English ; now by the old church of St. Jacques, gorgeous as one of the mediæval

lanterns in a collection—all sorts of recollections of an older Dieppe, a childhood's Dieppe, attend me or go on before. I know my way up to the old fort, out to old Sody's shop, where the Paris diligence used to come in.

The picture is dim enough, confused as are all childish recollections; but it fills in gradually, helped by old details from nurses and parents—a picture of the English colony days, of the era when it was a sanctuary, and the Refuge.

Curious talk, old stories—the Story itself—come floating back. As I walk along, the figures fall in groups, crossing like the figures in a country-dance. I see the diligences come in; the packets arrive; the decayed English of the colony taking their places. The parties and the cards are given in the little rooms over the shops; I hear the whispers of the last “story” going round; and, above all, of THE GREAT SCANDAL, which kept them busy speculating,

asking, receiving, and circulating details for more than a year.

The diligently restoring of this old picture made that day in Dieppe, and that night also, pass very lightly, very happily, perhaps very dreamily; and I now propose to present it, fresh and newly varnished, to the indulgent reader.

## CHAPTER I.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

**I**N those old times—pre-railway times—the place had another air. It wore a quaint old-fashioned look, and flourished all the year round. It did not moulder away in the winter, but became even more picturesque then in colours, costumes, and character. It had elements highly dramatic; comedy and tragedy were going on day and night. It seems to me now to have the air of Calais, when the sentimental Sterne was travelling. Where now is the English colony, the strange settlers, the genteel “broken down,” the idle, the respectable,

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the adventurer, whom some misfortune (Dieppe courtesy included frailty, as well as distress, in that term) drove from fatherland; the infinite variety of character and profession? Even their dress—for they clung to the old English clothes, and proudly displayed them even in their decay—inspired an air of vagabond picturesqueness.

What queer, fitful society on that parti-coloured French background! Curious clergymen, lively *ci-devant* or *soi-disant* officers, sudden comers, more sudden goers; nothing surprising, everything welcome; abundant curiosity, and everything known. “Delightful people” came, with the air of wealth; shone and glittered awhile, were charming, were called on, gave parties, and “were an addition to the society.” Of a sudden there was a void; their place knew them no more. They were gone in the night. It was like a death, but it caused no surprise.

Winter was the season proper for the exiles; the fashionables, of course, came down in the summer to bathe, and were seen in their fine dresses, at the établissement. Not yet had come the flaunting rush of extravagant demireps, with their dozen dresses a day, from the imperial court.

The English had no sympathy with these fine strangers; they rather “pooh-poohed” them. Strange English! wonderful English! The lowest, most broken of the whole, talked of the England that had used them so cruelly—and which would to a certainty seize on them and drag them off to iron-barred rude lodgings—with pride and even arrogance. Everything in that dear land was superior. *They* were identified with its glories; they had still part in everything that happened there. Everything English was superior to the poor wretched French who were sheltering them. The humblest “bag-man,” whom they saw off by

the packet, they looked on with pride and respect—*he* was going to England.

How many twinges they daily suffered as they turned away from that monotonous, yet necessary, ceremonial, for they knew *they* durst not set foot on the homeward-bound *Eagle*. The majors and reduced fathers spoke of Dieppe to each other as this “cursed hole;” and, by a fiction tacitly accepted, it was understood that every one could “get away” when he pleased, but was kept there by high concerns—“education of my daughters,” “When my poor Mary’s health gets better, please God,” and the like. No one, however coarse-minded, had the indecency to pull off this genteel little veil; for there was a due reciprocity in such transactions. Every one, too, was “getting back to England” shortly; and after the newspapers had been duly read, there was always plenty of pleasing conversation upon home affairs—a wondering what “Canning would do,” with an intimate knowledge of

“Peel,” and of his mind, and an easy familiarity with the motions of the court and the royal family. This was maintained with a yet more intimate knowledge, in presence of some of the inferior race whose hospitality they were enjoying, and to whom they spoke with authority. Such is all human nature again, and again, and over again, as any one, watching these odd creatures would have great profit and entertainment in working out for himself—as any one, too, would find repeating itself, perhaps, at this very hour.

Yet all the colonists were not of this pattern. There were English and Irish families of good condition,—upright souls, who had found the French port more suited to their means; well-born and gentle widow ladies and their daughters; honest gentlemen of slender resources, who feared that at home they could not respectably support themselves without debt, who left without owing a shilling, and who lived

here comfortably and without anxiety, and paid their way honourably.

It is but another touch of human nature to say that the Dieppe tradesmen had rather a contempt for these ladies and gentlemen who met their engagements so honourably, and “trusted” them much less than they did the noble and glittering customers, who ordered profusely and never paid so much as a franc. Nay, even their recollection of these open-handed sharpers was indulgent: they were “*pauvres garçons!*” so much does the *manner* of a thing enter into the thing itself. All this seems as if written of a hundred years back, like the days of the Sentimental Journey; and yet it is barely five-and-twenty years ago.

At the end of a certain autumn about that time but few of the fine company were left, and the company that used to come streaming down the Grande Rue and Rue St. Jacques, down to the port, to see the packet come in,—walking in the middle

of the street on the round stones which make a French street look picturesque—had, thinned off a good deal. That duty came like dinner. No decent resident would have missed it for the world. It was the most piquant moment of the enforced life, and between five and six we were sure to see old Filby—captain he was called, but “Heaven knows what rank he had held,” or in what service—and the good-looking young Dempsey, who wore jewellery, and Mrs. Dalrymple and her daughters ; with later, Mr. Blacker, the oldest resident, secretary to the English church, whom we shall know very well shortly, were seen posting down by odorous lanes, through “roos,” and short cuts, to the port.

Captain Filby was the sure sign and token of its being time to go down ; for he started punctually, round as a martello tower, buttoned, it must be said, in a brown coat, with a red face, and “damning” the stones at every step. He could tell us plenty about

the place, where he had been some fifteen years and more ; a hard cruel old fellow, selfish, and alone in the world. But he knew everything about every one, that is, everything that was bad, and slew characters by the hour. Ask Boulaye, the wine merchant and banker—"Bully the banker" he was invariably spoken of by the English ; ask White, the new and popular single English doctor ; ask Macan, the other doctor, struggling against a long family and a Mrs. Macan at home ; ask the little Frenchwoman at the corner, who sold paper, and steel pens like needles ; ask Marshall, who kept the English restaurant—they all said he was "a screw." and a bad fellow. But still he was feared, and, when he chose, could be amusing. Some one, arrived by the steamer yesterday, (going away to-morrow morning by the diligence), and sitting down with him on the bench, gives him a good cigar. (He was surly at first, but the sight of the case had softened him.) It is surprising what a

sketch of the place he gives in a bare ten minutes.

“Where are you stopping? Hotel Ryle? I wouldn’t put my foot in that place—you’ll see how Le Buff will stick it on, to-morrow morning. A regular nest of swindlers—of course he gets it out of his company, who come here in the season. The Paris beau monde—b’ Gad! ha, ha!—they call ’em. Why, one good English gentleman would buy and sell the whole lot. You should see the set that came down here from Paris. Brummagem counts and dukes—fellows not to compare with a well-fed English shopboy. I know I wouldn’t be the fool to forget my purse, with an English tenpun-note in it, on the table of the Ryle. And as for the women, sir, the droves of brazen, painted, canvas and varnish;” but, indeed, it would not do to give the captain’s language in full, on *this* part of his subject. “No, you should go to Wheeler’s, behind us here, a good

English house, close to the packet—straightfor'ard place, and something like beef and mutton—you'll get a beefsteak there something like,—and you can see yesterday's Chronicle. I can tell you Wheeler's knocked many a napoleon out of the French rascals here, and is a rich man, and could buy and sell Le Buff and his Ryle twice over."

How curious are the little corners or garrets of the human heart! for there were English there who had heard the captain depreciate Wheeler, as much as he was now doing Le Bœuf. But as between Wheeler and himself it was one question; between Wheeler and Le Bœuf, a "scurvy" Frenchman, it was another.

Captain Filby, with both hands fixed on the top of a strong stick, which had a large tassel, and puffing his cigar, would go on:

"Look at him! look at that! What a hurry you're in, to be sure! That's Blacker,

sir, the secretary—he's heard there's some little Jack of an honourable at the Ryle whom he wants to catch flying. I can hear him as plain as I do you: 'I am secretary to the English Fund here, sir. How do you do, sir? If I can be of the smallest use, Mrs. Blacker shall call on your ladies;' and all that gammon, you know. He'll never take his soul to heaven with him, and don't want to, I dare say.

"Why, I know the fellow had to cut—cut, sir, from a small place in Shropshire, and left every little shopkeeper in the place unpaid, and yet he struts it here as if he was some Don. He has all the foolish women under his thumb, and don't he pick up his five-franc pieces at cards? I wouldn't sit down with that man, sir, at a game of whist, for a trifle. He affects to be king of the whole place. 'You must call on Mrs. Thingummy—charming people, just come.' And charming people they do turn out.

“That’s a fellow called West, as dry a chip as any high-and-dry Scotchman. He’s by the way of being the wise man of us all; and look at his sister, as tough and dry as himself—nice pair of Pundits *they* are. They are of the elect, you know—the virtuous. You and I are not good enough company for them. They must give a tone to the place. We’re all raps, you know, here—ha, ha! That man, do you know—and he’s a good forty-five if he’s an hour—is a lover, sir—nothing short of a lover—consumed with fires, and all that! It’s all Platonic with him. ‘I’ve an interest in you, my dear; keep yourself apart from the set here,’ and all that. But there isn’t a fool in the town but sees the man is drivelling—drivelling over the girl, that little Dacres, and forgets his years and infirmities. And the jealous look-out the fellow keeps—stern as a johndarm. ‘Not a breath, my dear, must

sully your spotless purity.' Spotless grandmother. It sickens me, so it does !

" I tell you what," added the captain, looking cautiously round, " that wise cocked-up fellow has a history tacked to him, as sure as my name's Filby ; and I'll make it out yet. You don't know the queer things that bring people here. What does a fellow like that—a lawyer, too—want hanging about here ? Why can't he show himself in his court, instead of spooning after young school-girls just half his age ? Halloa ! there we come. Now there's a show for you, sir. All English—true blue, every one. Let the French ma'amselles beat *those* cheeks, sir, if they can. One, two, three, four, five, six—there's a scraggy odd one, but on the whole good—and stuck-up Pringle, with her aide-de-camp, bringing up the rear." So would this amiable exile describe the points and characteristics of his companions in the

settlement. It would be a very charitable person that would say "old Filby was not soured." He was originally bad and ill-conditioned, and it was remarked that the only seasons he was in fair good humour, was after some such expectoration of gall and vinegar.

Round this corner, to the left of the port, and facing the sea and the établissement, were the line of hotels, "Ryle" and others, and beyond them a terrace of private houses, with long gardens in front, like suburban houses. Over one little gate, diligently barred, was a large arch, with a good English brass plate, on which was, in good English, "BOARDING SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES: Principal, Miss Pringle." Out of this establishment had now defiled the little procession, so justly noticed by Captain Filby. They were not more than ten or a dozen strong, and the rosy cheeks and good complexions of the English "meeses" excited the admiration of

French amateurs. The tall Miss Pringle, carrying her head back terribly, and a parasol sharp and long as a bayonet, kept a wary look-out along the ranks, and seemed as dangerous a "customer" as a gendarme. Had not many of us seen in our Galignani an occasional little advertisement, "To English Families residing in France.—MISS PRINGLE invites the attention of parents, guardians, and others, to the advantages of her establishment, situated in the most salubrious portion of Dieppe, and directly facing the sea; a limited number of young ladies. She is permitted to refer to the Rev. Frederick Penny, chaplain to the English church, Dieppe; to M. Le Pasteur Pigou, Dieppe; to George Dick, Esquire, H.B.M. Consul, Dieppe; to Mr. Blacker." Her pupils, however, were chiefly daughters of wealthy persons in trade at Brighton or Dover, anxious for the prestige of having a daughter educated abroad.

There was also among them the daughter of one of the Dieppe English, a girl who had just passed in the little procession, quite unworthy of the captain's praise, as not having cheeks "bursting with health." Her attractions were more refined. She was small in shape and figure, with brown hair, wavy, though not thick, and lying close to her head, whose pretty shape it showed. The face was long, oval, and narrow; but full of a warm colour. Her eyes were quick and bright, yet became very soft and gentle at times—and she walked with decision.

A more intelligent critic than the captain would have said: "There's a girl of some character, that can think for herself, that has curious ideas, that can turn a pleasant saying; a girl that will not be content to jog through the streets of life, in a hackney-cab, but will look for her landau and footmen and powder; domestic, but ambitious; affectionate, yet worldly." Such would be

a fair estimate of Miss Pringle's pupil ; and we, too, picking her out from the bouncing girls before and behind her, may whisper that her name is Lucy Dacres, whom her father, the pleasant "Harco" Dacres, used to call "the dear girl."

Who could best in the colony fill in the details of this sketch ? No one certainly so well as the Mr. West, who had been so contemptuously described by the captain. That gentleman knew the young girl thoroughly ; had "travelled over her mind." Any one could point out to us where "M. Vaist," the middle-sized gentleman, with the small, soft, brown beard and moustache, faintly sprinkled with grey, and the quick eyes, lodged with his sister in the Place. Being a barrister, who, it was said, has been obliged to abandon good practice at the English bar "for certain reasons, you see," he had gained quite a reputation by taking up the cases of one or two unhappy English who had been un-

justly dragged before the magistrate by some harpies of the town—widows and maiden ladies—and by his calm and able management had quite confounded the “judge of peace,” who, from that time, hated but feared him.

To Miss Pringle, of Victoria House Academy, he had given admirable legal advice about recovering her rights from the parents of one of her pupils. (The captain had sneered tremendously. “Nice games, nice games, sir—regular Joe Surface. If *I* had a daughter *I* wouldn’t let him into the place. Legal advice, indeed!”) None of the refugees, however, dared to be free with him, however they might speculate in private. There was a manner about him, and about his cold sister (“she only wants the beard, and you’d mistake one for the other,” again says Captain Filby)—a marble sort of reserve, with a latent power of attack and injury, that was highly dangerous.

Indeed, Mr. Gilbert West made no secret of his contempt and loathing "for the whole crew," their meannesses, their dirty whisperings, and degrading pettiness. At least, they seemed to read this in his face and bearing; and he certainly kept himself aloof and superior to them all. That sort of air jarred exceedingly. "What the deuce brings him here? Why the deuce does he stay here, if he thinks himself too good for the place?" (That "strengthener" "the deuce" was the popular form of asseveration at Dieppe, and used a hundred times in the day.) "Set him up, indeed! He daren't go home, the fellow!" Less prejudiced people, however, gave out that his real reason was the health of his sister, who suffered from her nerves, and who somehow found that she had less pain in that place than anywhere else. They had about the best apartments in the town; in the cheerful Place where a company or so of a regiment came and drummed, and glittered in

the morning, like the shop opposite where they sold articles of Paris, and over which was Mr. West's apartment. The Grande Rue passed right through the Place, and a little further on, led to the port.

But now, as the monkeys of the place, the raff of chattering commissioners, touters from Wheeler's, "Le Buff's," and other hotels, the porters with barrows, and the custom-house men, hands deep in pockets, are lounging down to the pier, the smoke of the packet having been discerned, a tall gentleman comes posting down, as by express, to meet her. A most important person, with whom we have all a good deal to do—Mr. Blacker, secretary to the English Fund.

Everybody there, French and English, knew Blacker, the oldest resident, the tall, full-bodied gentleman, a little stooped about the shoulders, and with a round white face, garnished with the true mutton-chop whiskers, and an air as of something to do

with a deanery. He carried always a crooked-top cane, which, as he walked, he put through the old-fashioned exercise, now and again flourishing it violently, as though it were a private catherine-wheel. He sometimes wore a good honest "neckerchief," wound several times about his throat, sometimes a sober-coloured stock. Everybody knew him, except the poor dissenting clergy of the place, the mere French curés, whom he kept at a distance.

## CHAPTER II.

LUCY—"THE DEAR GIRL."

IT was the custom for the whole community to muster in its strength on "the port," a sort of mall, and see the packet come in. That ceremonial, it would have been imagined, must have grown monotonous from daily repetition ; but, on the contrary, it never palled : appetite, as the French gentlemen would have said, only came with eating. The young ladies would no more have missed that rappel, than they would have missed their " church " of a Sunday.

Sometimes there were delays, and the little English brothers were sent up a certain winding hill, which commanded a good view of the open sea, to try and make out the distant smoke. When they returned with the news, Matilda and Mary put away their work, hurried to their glasses to settle their bonnets, and then repaired slowly across, to the Prado, already crowded. There they carried out, poor souls, the little pattern of home life, the genteel greetings, the surprise, the overjoy, the coquetting with the rather shady cavaliers. All were wisely agreed in carrying out the fiction, which indeed made things more pleasant.

And here, as elsewhere, were your desirable men, your "nice people," whom every one ought to know, your select "coterie" which drew a line. The well-to-do and genteel, only birds of passage, would not know the poor and genteel. The latter drew a line between themselves and the "shabby genteel." The shabby genteel

would not know the class which the captain spoke familiarly of as "the Raps." Yet there were some mysterious laws in this mixed society. For the "Raps," combined with show, and money, and agreeable manners, could do more than any of the other classes, and made their way anywhere. There was always a charming family, a quiet, gentlemanly father of military bearing, a wife and nice daughters, whose new arrival Mr. Blacker, who had "just come from calling on them," was heralding about in all excitement, pestering every lady with:

"My dear madam, I must make it a point, you will call on them. Most charming people; one of the best of our old English country families."

"Indeed!"

"I have been taking *him* round to the shops. They want looking-glass, carriages, horses—really quite an air about them. Come here *only* for the daughter's health

—sent by Sir Duncan Dennison." (What a compliment to the place was that "*only!*") Mr. Blacker, thus impetuous in his trumpeting new comers, every one of whom he took up with enthusiasm, and nearly every one of whom, become the blackest of his swans, was sure to bring the most awkward result to his predictions. By that time, however, he had grown indifferent, had found swans far more black, and left the first to their fate.

Now they were clustering more thickly on that poor promenade. The faded costumes began to gather. There were meetings, great strictness of etiquette in the way of easy salutation and easier conversation. The gentleman in the grey suit, and with the brown beard just turning a faint grey, was there, with a lady on his arm—a square-faced woman of about fifty, with a stern and solid brown curl laid on each side of her cheek ; yet she was not a

"dowdy,"—and wore a handsome shawl, which every one can do, but wore it handsomely, which every one cannot do.

She was the barrister's sister, with a cold manner, stiff and stern as were her curls, but was believed by a few to have a warm heart.

They were now standing apart. He was looking out towards the town—towards the Grande Rue, and the sister was glancing towards the packet. "Ah! here she is!" he said at last, as the young girl who had walked last in Miss Pringle's procession came tripping towards them. She gave one hand to each, with a smiling and delighted face, her right to Mr. West. "Thank you, oh thank you," she said, earnestly, "for speaking to Miss Pringle. It was such a pleasant surprise, and I felt so miserable when we were passing the port. But I suppose she wished to keep me in suspense, and train us to habits of self-restraint. At the same time, if she

had refused, and as I am leaving her to-morrow——"

"Well," said Mr. West, "now what would you have done? Let us hear."

"I *think*," said she, seriously, and fixing her eyes on him, "I should have come myself. Oh yes! Why should she restrain me when I wish to meet my dear father? What discipline is there in that, I, the oldest pupil in the school, should wish to know? Will it do me any good?"

She smiled; Margaret West looked grave:

"What is the use of going to school at all then?" she said, drily.

"Quite right," said West, sarcastically. "I don't believe in schools, for one; but still, poor Pringle means well. If you were to revolt, Miss Cobbe and the others would follow suit, and all would become chaos. Ah, here's the packet coming! See how these rude starers are gathering to get good places in the front line. Now, will it bring your father? That is the first ques-

tion ; and has he arranged with the great patron for a seat ? that is the second, I am afraid."

The young girl—she was about nineteen—drew her head up in a stately manner, a common motion with her.

"And what is the third, and the fourth ? You are always doubting," she said, quickly. "That is because you think everything so bad in this world. I would much rather think well of the world, and be taken in now and again. I would, indeed, Mr. West."

She said this with an air of defiance. A kind of pained sort of expression came into West's face. His sister turned to him with a look of superior triumph. He answered gently :

"When you know the world as well as I do, you may change your opinion. Besides, I do not apply this to all—to your father, or yourself, or to any one. The reason I said that was, there are so many chances,

so many difficulties, that I would not have you hope too much."

She paused, gave a little stamp of vexation, and an impatient movement of her arm. "Always the way with me. Ungracious, unkind when I don't mean to be so. And to you, my true, kind friend! I could beg your pardon. I would go down here on my knees, if you like. I wouldn't mind these creatures here; indeed I would not. Say you forgive me, or I'll do it this moment!"

She had his hand in both hers. The sister interposed, a little excited, for the young girl seemed about doing what she said. "Oh, really; please don't, with all these people about. Such folly!"

He drew his hand quietly away. "Not exactly folly," he said, smiling; "but these creatures would not *quite* understand it."

"But *do* you forgive me? I talk so lightly. The English master says that I don't know the exact force of English, and

don't measure my words. I could not find enough of them to tell you all I feel to you, and of your goodness to us, and how much I think of you when I am alone—"

The sister turned away impetuously. "The packet must be coming now. They are all going down to the end of the pier."

"Just look at our friend," said Mr. West, half to himself, "seeking the stray ones of his flock." Lucy looked and smiled.

For now comes posting down, breaking through the ranks, Mr. Blacker, swinging his stick, his head looking to the right and left, and an air as though he were carrying despatches, or was, at least, an officer of the port. His was a sort of official progress, like a royal personage, dropping a word to each. He had to stop many times, and to return many salutes. To some inferiors he was "short;" but there was one or two, a Mr. and Mrs. Freemantle, true people, only there for a fortnight or a month, with whom he could turn back, and smile, and sway

forward again, with obsequious homage. The season was well over, and these people, coming home from their travels, had waited at this port, to let Mrs. Freemantle refit. She was languid and delicate, and used an eye-glass.

"What a curious set of people!" Mrs. Freemantle would say, with an amused air. "Where are they all got from?"

"Heaven knows, Mrs. Freemantle," said Mr. Blacker, repudiating his friends with alacrity. "They send them to us from all quarters; some, my dear madam, the very scourings of the street. In our season, indeed, we do very well. The nobility come down to us. Princesse de la Tour Caserne is not very long gone, and the Duchesse Florençay, who indeed did me the honour to come to our English chapel with me, on my arm. My dear Mrs. Freemantle, you *must* come back to us next year."

The greedy settlers stood in ranks on each side to stare. Not one of the pas-

sengers, no matter what his sufferings at the moment, but resented this degradation, being thus butchered to make an English holiday. What rusted coats; what repaired theatrical finery and scraps of fashion, half a dozen years old; what air of "coming on the Prado," and simpering, and greeting, and turning round to walk in line four long. Poor souls! After all, this was but the hour's exercise in the prison yard.

Now is coming up the packet at last, turning the corner of the white-washed piles, with the native porters in blouses, shouting hard, and "hauling in" as if a man-of-war was coming alongside. It is the old Eagle, corpulent, bulky at its abdomen and paddle-boxes, green all over its bulwarks, a highly fashionable colour—then considered a fine specimen of naval architecture. The new English are very strong on the decks. The other, old, stale English, waiting for their prey, are drawn up in two solid lines. In the foremost rank are Mr.

West and the two ladies. They had never been in such a place before, but there were reasons now. The young girl was stretching eagerly forward, her arm in his, which at times, from excitement, she clung to. "I don't see him. No, he's not come. Oh, what shall we do? Why didn't he write? How cruel of him!"

"Hush, hush!" he whispered, kindly; "not so loud. Think of the people about us. We can't tell as yet."

"There he is! There he is!" she cried, quite loud, and making the "raff" smile. "I see him! There's Harco!"

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## CHAPTER III.

## THE EAGLE COMES IN.

**A**LREADY the stream had begun to flow —the long file that only wanted a chain to make them like a string of convicts, they looked wretched enough. There were the soldiers on guard, and the gloomy prison into which they passed. And now a tall gay gentleman, with a very shining hat, a “rolling” brim, and set much on the side of his head, a jovial face, and a blue coat with a velvet collar, a curled black moustache, came along the gangway. He held a little black bag in his hand, and was

nodding a great many times to his daughter as he came along. He seemed to be singing.

In a second, she had broken from the line in spite of a sad-looking soldier, had her hands on his shoulders, and had drawn him down to her, to cover him with kisses. Mr. Harcourt Dacres protested good-humouredly : " Oh, I declare now, Lulu—the dear girl. Easy now. Not before the genteel people; wait till we get home—in the front drawing-room." Indeed, the two lines were smiling, tittering, and laughing loudly, and the soldier put her back. She saw her father looking round, and heard him say, " Where's that colonel gone? in the moon again I suppose? " His Lulu, now sternly put inside the ropes, was making all manner of affectionate motions to him. But he was relieved presently, when a handsome, tall, and foreign-looking gentleman, retiring and modest, with his eyes on the ground, followed along the avenue. " Come on,

Vivian, my Colonel," Lucy heard her father cry, with cheerful encouragement, and she gave a little sigh; for she knew this was one of the useful objects of which her father was fond of taking possession, absorbing them, and finding his profit in them.

The bearing of the stranger made considerable impression on the two lines. He was civilized and shy; "so nice-looking"—"quite interesting"—the last of which words made him raise his eyes half slyly, half sadly. They were very deep, full, black eyes. He had small black moustaches, with his cheeks shaved close; a sort of Velasquez face, a romantic young girl said. The ladies and gentlemen had an instinct that here was the real stuff—a different texture from their own—and who, alas! it was plain, was not to stay among them. Harco himself had a pleasant expression, which he called a "tarry-marry-man." Captain Filby, who had got a good place in front, shouldering some ladies back, said

half aloud : " See, that Dacres has brought over a fowl to truss, a nice fat one, I'll lay you a guinea ! " And here was Mr. Dacres coming out on the other side of the custom-house, where his Lulu and Mr. West and sister were waiting. He was talking as he came out.

" Now, don't *think* of going on. Wait over to-night. That diligence would kill you ; and if you post, there is no hurry. At the Royle they'll take good care of you ; *I'll* give you a card to Le Bœuf. I wish we had a corner to——"

" I think I must go on," said the gentleman, irresolutely. " I have an appointment in Paris, and it is so lonely staying at an hotel."

" Deuce a bit more lonely than in a coupé, my friend, or—if you like, I'll drop in on you, or else *you* come up to us. This is the dear girl I was telling you of. Lulu, Colonel Vivian, of the something Foot, I forget what."

The officer drew back, and, taking off his hat, made a very profound bow, with a bright smile.

“ Well ! Will you come ? ”

“ I am sorry I cannot. When I am returning, I may stay a few days here, and then I hope to have an opportunity of improving your acquaintance ; and, indeed, if you would be so kind as to come up to-night——”

“ Then depend on me, colonel. I’ll only just rattle through a cutlet, which I know my Lulu has ready for me——”

“ But why hurry ? ” said the other. “ I suppose they will have dinner ready at the Royal, and if you will be kind enough to take share of it——”

“ Never say it again, my dear friend. If you go on and order it, I’ll step home with these traps——”

“ Oh, papa, papa,” burst out Lucy, in loud reproach. “ The first evening you have come back, and we waiting and ex-

pecting you every day ; and poor mamma ! No, sir ; indeed he *can't* go with you."

" Oh, you will excuse me," said the officer, gravely. " I did not know how it was. I am so sorry——"

" My dear sir ! " Mr. Dacres struck in, gaily. " Why, you don't take me for one of the domestic birds, out and out ? My dear Lu, you will have enough of me, never fear. You don't know how long I am going to stay with you. He's a stranger, my dear, a stranger in the land——"

" Very well, papa ; do as you like," said Lucy, with a trembling voice. " I had better go home, then, at once, and tell poor mamma."

" Do, that's a sensible child, and say I'll be home about nine, or ten, at tea, or a little after."

" Yes, papa," said she, almost sorrowfully ; " we know what *that* means."

" You may depend on me, Miss Dacres ; for I am as tired myself as he is. But I think,

perhaps, it might be better—suppose we say breakfast to-morrow, instead?”

“Well, my dear sir,” said the other, with perfect good humour, “if you *do* like to reconsider your kind offer of hospitality, with all my heart; and I’ll relish my little girl’s cutlet with an uncommon sharp appetite, I can tell you.”

This only caused the invitation to be renewed. It was settled.

“I declare I am getting quite in feather to-night,” said Mr. Dacres, rubbing his hands. “Now, I tell you—I’ll get home, and give my old lady a hug—*her* mamma, I mean. Just take the salt water out of my eye, and slip into a clean linen—a-hem! My Petsy, I declare,” he went on to her, in a low voice, “it cuts me to the heart to leave you and mamma to-night; but I have my reasons. I’ll tell you about them after. Of the two, I’m sure I’d sooner be with you and poor mamma, sitting and chatting there, and telling you all the news and our

little stories, dear, and all the fun, you know, I've seen since."

Mr. Dacres's voice assumed a half-plaintive tone as he said this.

"Indeed, I am sure you would, Harco," said the young girl, energetically; "and we'll sit up for you."

"That's right, that's my own child. How are you, West? How's the old Godspeed getting on? It seems about two years and four months, though I believe it's not quite two months; is it, my child? Ah, colonel, I bet you she's got a bit of a stick at home, like a schoolboy's, with every day notched off, the dear girl. Go on up with that fellow with the cap. He'll show you the way; and I'll be after you. Now, dear."

Mr. West was still standing by, his eyes fixed with disdain, or contempt, on the handsome face of the officer. His eyes would wander from the face down to his feet, and up again.

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Mr. Dacres nodded pleasantly, and, with his daughter's arm cozily in his, said, "Come along, West;" and walked slowly on.

"Now," said Lucy, giving a sort of dance to keep up with him—"now, deary, tell me the news—and good news. You never wrote a line, you know. That, of course, we did not expect."

He laughed. "My dear girl, I only write for money, and to people who *have* money to send, and I knew this place was not exactly the quarter, eh? Well, but how is poor mamma—the pain in her side, dear? Does she suffer at nights?"

"Shoulder, shoulder, papa! Don't you recollect? Well, but she is dying to know, and so are we all; Mr. West, also."

"Oh," he said, carelessly, and speaking fast, "about Sir John Trotter and the Seat! Well, to tell you the truth, he behaved so infernally stuck up, and impudent, and

patronising—and ‘I must have this,’ and ‘You must do that’—that I declare to you, one fine evening, I turned my back, and told him to take himself, and his rotten borough to the deuce. A wretched old Jacobite, and as mad as any hatter that made a headpiece for a Christian.”

“ Oh, ‘papa,’” she said, stopping in front of him in the little street, and speaking with deep reproach, and even anger. “ You *did* this ! and after all your promises and engagements to us, and to Mr. West, who helped you so !”

“ Oh, never mind me,” said Mr. West, calmly ; “ I did not expect much more, recollect !”

“ And what *did* you expect, sir ?” said the father, turning on him a little fiercely. “ Tell me that, sir. What did you expect ?” Then, with a change of tone, “ But go along now ! Are you both to be down on me in this way ? Can I help it ? Can the

leopard change his spots, or the black his skin? Surely you know Harco Dacres. Ask them, on the western circuit, about me; they'll tell you there's not a better man on it. And now I declare, Lulu, it would have rejoiced the cockles of your little heart to see the way they received your poor dad—big wigs, seniors, all! And I had so much to do! The best case that turned up. A grand slander one; damages, five thousand. What a burning speech I gave 'em! I have the Liverpool paper here, with full report. And I was to have been in another, the fee in my pocket when—but no matter. Now, wasn't this a deuced deal better than cringing to a dirty mean Scotch baronet for his old borough? No, no. Harcourt Dacres, ma'am, would sooner earn a crust honestly at his profession than have the applause of a British senate, purchased by an obsequious sacrifice of honour, virtue, right or principle!"

Mr. West, walking with his eyes on the ground, gave an involuntary smile to the stones. Lulu smiled also, and shook her head.

## CHAPTER IV.

## HARCOURT DACRES.

ANY Dieppe exile could gather, from a conversation like that recorded in the last chapter, a fair notion of Mr. Dacres's character. On the circuit he was "a real good fellow," and the object of many more such compliments. He had good talents ; could make a rattling, dashing speech ; in fact, *was said to be an Irishman, though he always repelled "the charge."*—(In his warmth of denial, this extraordinary expression escaped from him.)

Mr. Dacres could have been in good

practice on the circuit, had he chosen. He could laugh a case out of court; but he was often accused of sacrificing his client to his speech; and in a heavy case of an elopement, an injured husband seeking damages, could pour out the most pathetic declamation, "leaving not a dry eye in court;" and deeply moved himself, with faltering voice, and tears in his own eyes, would make the most "beautiful" appeal in the world—all pathos and piety. At the bar dinner Harco would be "in great feather," telling capital stories, taking off the injured husband, his client of the day, compounding punch for the mess, and finally starting a little loo at a snug table in the corner, which went on till two or three in the morning.

It must be said that Mr. Dacres was punctilious in arranging his gaming debts, and many a little "fiver" or "tenner" "bound to my little Lulu at Dieppe" (shown to a few with a sort of pathetic

paternal air) was handsomely diverted to the more pressing calls of honour. As for Dacres's "paper," it had been always flying about; but he had that mysterious power, given only to men in these sort of difficulties, of somehow so dealing with charms — magician-like — as to keep himself "afloat." For a time, at least, we, the more respectable and more scrupulous in payments, might strive in vain to get grace for fifty pounds.

He was absent a great deal from Dieppe, where "the wife and child" were kept,—of course called away by business, running over there now and again when he could. Wise people often said to him he should get into Parliament. "Why, a man that could make a speech like you, Dacres, ought to be solicitor-general at least." He could do other things as cleverly. He was connected with Mr. Black's well-known journal, and could rattle off slashing, vigorous articles on the "spur;" that is,

when the humour took him, or when Mr. Black could get hold of him. "That man would be worth his good twelve hundred a year, if he'd only stick to it." He could write an article for any review in truly brilliant style, on the "cut of a horse"—and, indeed, on all matters connected with the world, in which that noble animal moves, was unimpeached.

It was not surprising, therefore, that when nervous friends assured him solemnly—over punch—that "he ought to get into Parliament—that it would be the making of him," he began at last to let the matter "come near him."

A Scotch baronet, Sir John Trotter, whose son was going to travel in the East for two or three years, had met him at the cheerful board, and been "amused" by his humour. He was half inclined to let Dacres keep his seat warm; and being sounded on the matter, wrote at last to say that he would be glad to see

Mr. Dacres at Trotterstown, N.B., for a few days, and talk the matter over.

This joyful news came when he was residing at Dieppe with his family, at a period of enforced domesticity, being very "low" indeed, not in spirits, but in other things. There were periods when he was obliged to be "dark," and when he complained pathetically he was not allowed to "breathe the air of his" (soi-disant) "native land." "After all, sir," he would say, huddling a few things into "the bag," "this is lonely work enough, and work was made for slaves. I want kindly faces about the stove-side—on the happy hearth, my boy. My poor girl withering in a foreign land, among the mounseers, and I enjoying myself here, like a beast!"

It was during one of these compulsory retirements, which had gone on longer than usual, and seemed to defy his usual skill for arrangement, that word came of what he called "the Trotter offer." A council

was held. He had his darling Lulu on his knee. That young girl's eyes lightened and flashed; for she had a curious vigour of mind that often set Miss Pringle at her wits' end, and a born eloquence like that of her father.

"You must go, Harco," she said—she often spoke to him as a brother—"it is such a chance. Only think, to be in Parliament, before the country, the nation! Why, you are lost as you are. Mamma, dear, if we were to give up everything, we must send him off."

"Then I'm afraid that won't go for much. But, in any case, d'ye take me for the selfish heartless father that would strip his wife and child of their little all, in *that* kind of a way? By the way," he added, suddenly, putting his child off his knee, "where's West? We must have his long head in, besides ours. Of course I mean long, in the figurative way. Eh, Mrs. D., what could you sport for the occasion?"

The wife was a gentle, rather stupid woman, with none of the Celtic perfervidum genius that was in father and daughter. She had been handsome; had been married for her beauty; was tall, worn, and, even now, elegant.

“What can I say, Harcourt?” she said, nervously. “I am the worst person in the world for advice.”

He turned away impatiently. “She never took an allusion.” He was pointing at something else. He had a certain delicacy, and would not say more.

“I’ll go and put my head alongside of West’s. We’ll knock out something together for this grand occasion.”

“Oh, papa,” said Lulu, stopping. “No; you *must* not. You promised me before, that was never to happen again.”

“Promise be hanged!” he said, angrily. “D’ye suppose I’m not to consult a friend?”

“Then if you do, Harco,” said she,

decidedly, "I'll go too. I'll forbid him to lend you money, I tell you before; he will do what I tell him, if it was to order him to go on his knees. You know he would."

"What the deuce will you have me do? Isn't that a specimen, now, of the way I'm treated in my family? Was there ever a poor hunted devil so checked? Ah, Miss Lu, you should have been as delicate as all that when Mother Pringle's last half came round!"

She gave a cry and started back. "Oh, you did that? Oh, how cruel, how unkind to expose me to that. Oh, mamma, mamma, I'm humiliated for ever and ever;" and she tossed her arms in the air, and walked to and fro passionately.

"God Almighty now!" he exclaimed, "what's all this! You run off with things. I mean—I mean—what he gave that time I applied in that way; denied some of my own wants which were pressing enough, to keep up the credit of my child. Of *course*

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it was in the way of a loan. Haven't I a regard for the credit and honour of the child that I—of my *own* child?"

This exceptional way of putting the loan transaction, seemed of no avail; for his daughter, crying silently, merely sobbed out, "I shall never rest until that debt is discharged." Then she rose. "Go out now, papa, and walk, or go to him and consult him. But not a word of that. Mamma and I will find out some more honourable way to help you."

In an effusion of fatherly affection he went towards her. He believed himself quite genuine. "I'm a poor creature," he said. "God help us! I have no purpose and no principle. I don't know how I'll end. I wish I was thrown out like a dog somewhere. I'm unworthy of you both, two such angels."

"Poor, poor Harco!" said Lucy, running towards him; there were actually genuine tears in his eyes. "Don't say that, or

you'll make us wretched. Keep up; things will come right, and—and you'll be our M.P. yet."

Four small hands had found their way to the velvet collar and blue cloth shoulders, and the wretched father, as he called himself, broke from these sympathising creatures and went out into the open air to smoothe his brow. He had to take a "little glass" at the corner restaurant, too fatally near their residence.

Mother and daughter went in to council. Indeed, Lulu was chairman and council herself. For she had "the longest and strongest head of us all," her father said. There was in the family property a diamond brooch, a wedding present which Mr. Dacres had once actually paid for, and to which he had often circuitously alluded. Lulu had, however, determined it should be kept for a grand emergency. That seemed to be arrived now, and it should satisfy the Pringle obligation and the journey to

Trotterstown. It was worth about one hundred guineas.

The father was sent away in handsome case. He went rejoicing. Miss Lulu repaired to her friend, Mr. West, and, shocked and grieved, insisted on restoring to him what he had advanced for her; which he, knowing resistance was useless, accepted gravely, but a little annoyed. "Where did all this flush of gold come from?"

Lulu drew herself up. "Are we quite paupers as well as exiles?—is that the insinuation, Mr. West?"

"Who has insinuated anything, clever Miss Lucy? If I wished to find out, I have not forgotten my old craft."

"A detective, I suppose," she said, with trembling voice. "I don't doubt your gifts; but I know your motive in all this—a generous one. To lay *me* under odious obligation—*me*—to have me in your power."

“What would I gain by that? What is the profit in laying you under an obligation, Miss Lulu?”

“Never mind,” said Lulu, pacing up and down excitedly. “And please don’t call me *that*.”

“You mean something.—I insist on knowing. You make a charge—unkind, unfair, and ungenerous indeed—which has hurt me much.”

She saw his wounded face, and a pang came into hers. In an instant she had seized his hand, and made as though she would kiss it.

He stopped her. “Do not!” he said. “I would sooner have a fair, kindly judgment of me in your heart than such a—mere theatrical amende.”

“I am a child,” she rejoined, “a rash, foolish, wrong-hearted creature, full of hasty suspicion. Forgive me. Say so, or I can never bring myself to look at you,

“speak to you, or come into your presence again. Oh, say so!”

“Well, I do. There!” he said, sadly. “But it will always be this old story; and I shall be always the same fool.”

She smiled brightly, and shook her finger at him. “Though I say these things, you know how I like you *here* ;” laying her hand on her heart. “I do! Though you don’t believe it.”

He only repeated, in the same sad tone, half smiling, “I suppose I shall be the same, always—the same to the end of the chapter.”

“The same what?” said she, smiling.

This was but a very common pattern of what very often took place between the gentleman and his young lady. Her mamma deplored their “sparring,” and privately remonstrated with her daughter about her warm temper.

“Oh, mamma!” she would reply, “it makes us like each other all the better.”

She unconsciously uttered a truth. It was all nature in her, not pettishness nor vixenishness. She spoke out her mind, and could no more help speaking than she could help her eyes flashing.

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## BROTHER AND SISTER.

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"I had a presentiment it would turn out this way," said Mr. West. "However, it can't be helped; we must make the best of it. And you must not think of it."

"What is to become of us?" said Lucy, helplessly. "Though poor papa cannot help himself, we must not make a fuss to him about it."

“I have no patience with him,” said Mr. West, slowly: “and I own I am sadly disappointed. Of course I have no right to say anything *here*, or to say so much.” And he looked at Lucy; but she seemed determined to treat it lightly; perhaps she was rejoiced to see her father back.

“And why could he not stay? The first moment he arrived, to go off with a gentleman he picks up on a steamer!”

“But, Gilbert,” said his sister, impatiently, “what on earth has it to do with you?”

Miss Lucy was a little abstracted, and did not hear this speech.

“That gentleman with him!” she said, raising her eyes thoughtfully; “the handsome man you mean!”

“I knew you were coming to that,” said Mr. West, sarcastically. “The notion has been dancing before your little brain ever since, and now it comes out. I saw it all the time.”

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"One of the handsomest men I ever saw," she went on, with enthusiasm ; "like an Italian tenor."

Mr. West laughed in the same bitter way, and said :

"You saw that Italian — Farini — who came down from Paris to give a concert—a man with chalky cheeks—well, *he* was an Italian tenor ! "

She turned to him with colour mounting in her cheeks :

"You are out of humour to-night ; what is the matter ? Pray, may I not remark a handsome face without being brought to account for it ? Yes, and admire too ! Why do you lecture me, Mr. West, about tenors ? You will not find me inclined to sacrifice my independence, or be obsequious to you, *as some of the others are*, on any terms. I give you fair warning, Mr. West."

"Oh, Lulu !" said her quiet mamma, quite shocked at this burst.

"I don't care, mamma," said the young

girl, walking to and fro excitedly. "I am not going to submit to any influence or lecturing. I may be a poor weak girl, and his a strong powerful mind, and all that"—here she curtsied very low—"but I give fair notice I shall keep my freedom."

He turned away impatiently to the window. This was another "sparring" match, common enough between them.

Miss West said to her, bitterly :

"How sharp Miss Lucy Dacres is! Not so poor or so weak, after all, I suspect."

Before Lucy could answer, Mr. Dacres had entered the room, but quite changed—older, because "put out."

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servant ! I wonder he didn't add, ' They'll take care of you in the servants' hall ! ' "

" Poor papa ! " said she, going up to pat his head. " He was sick, recollect. "

" Oh, be off, now ! I'm tired, too, after my journey. When's this dinner to be ready ? I suppose I must wait hours, and then get a bit of tough leather ! Travelling hard and fast, and all last night, and then, looking forward to a snug comfortable evening, to be served in that way ! "

Who would think this to be the " delightful gay creature," all affection, and good humour, and heart ! Mr. West was looking at him with unconcealed contempt and dislike.

" We must go home now," he said. " Come, Margaret. It is unfortunate you should have come back, with such a disappointment ; but——"

" What d'ye mean by that, Mr. West ? " said the other, with a lowering brow. " It's my own affair, wholly and solely ; no man

else's money was embarked in it; and I can set off after fifty Trotters, fifty times, if I like. Do ye know, West, I think at times you're devilish free, and——"

"Hush!" said that gentleman, quietly. "This, of course, is Dieppe, where we have all a pleasant license in language allowed us. I was speaking of the dinner disappointment; but it's no matter."

"No more it is, my holy St. Francis de Sales—my good man suffering. Ha! ha! All I say is, let every man let me alone, and I'll let him alone. I'm a little too old a boy to be lectured or brought to book, by any of the professors. Fine work it is! Pretty pass."

Mr. West made no reply, but, with his sister, took his leave. There was a scornful half-defiant look in Miss Lulu's eyes, as she gave him her hand. Brother and sister went away home, leaving the family to their tough bit of "leather;" "the best company in the world" being now about to

vent his ill-humour and troubles on his wife and daughter. These "delightful" creatures require the lamps lit, and the scenery, and full boxes and pit, to inspire them even with ordinary good humour.

Mr. Gilbert West and his sister walked silently home to their rooms in the Place. When they had sat down, and found the lamps lighted, the sister spoke:

"I hope to-night has at last begun to open your eyes. You, with your all penetration, are now beginning to see what that girl is."

He did not answer, but lay back in his chair, his fingers together, his eyes on the ceiling.

"She gave you as good a hint to-night as you, with all your cleverness, would give. There was no misunderstanding it. 'I must have my liberty. I will not be lectured.' I declare," added Miss Margaret West, warming up, "I felt my blood boil as she spoke. Such an ill-regulated, ill-

brought-up creature ! She has no respect for you."

"She never meant *that*, at least, Margaret. You are mistaken there."

"I tell you what she meant, though. She meant to tell you she was tired of your following her, and paying and giving her good advice. Have you no comprehension ? She said it as plain as English words could put it. But is it any use talking to you ? You, a man of your years, forty-two—double that school-girl's age. No wonder she laughs at you."

"It's a folly, an infatuation," he said, in a low voice. "I admit it. Call it anything you like."

"And then," went on the sister, in a soft voice, "the air and manner of that man. He has no respect for you. I wonder you allow him to treat you in that way."

"Could you not see, Margaret, he had been taking his cherry brandy ?"

"Oh yes," went on the sister ; "but it is

time the whole folly should stop. I feel ashamed people here should be talking of your infatuation. They laugh at your excuse about me. Now I am well, have been well this year, and I am sick of the place, and dying to get home."

"It will come back again," he said. "You know it will. You say it will."

"Folly! A man turning grey of ripe age, that ought to be minding his law-books instead of running after school-girls. Gilbert, I had always a high opinion of your sense and wisdom; but latterly really you are getting childish."

"You are right, Margaret," said he, in a low voice. "And I begin to think you may be right."

"Oh, she is wise enough in her kind. She knows well what she is about. And then about the English officer. She saw that it annoyed you, and she went on. I could have set her down if I could have trusted my temper."

These were hard sayings and cruel home-thrusts, and West felt every one of them. She saw his wounded look, and then went over to him.

“ I only say this for your good, dear Gilbert, and I know well your affection for me, and what brought you here, and what keeps you here in this dreadful place. You think it is for my health, though indeed I am quite well now. But still I know that this—this liking of yours will grow into an infatuation, and mar all your life. She is only a child, and will treat you like a child. You will one day, when it is too late, deplore this miserable liking.”

He looked up, and took her hand. “ Margaret, I begin to be a little ashamed. You always say what is sensible. You are quite right. I do begin to see it is folly. But it is very hard. The worst is, she is no child; there you are wrong. Still I *do* begin to see the folly of it

all. I have been a fool; but," he added, with a rueful smile, "not a very great one, so far."

"Indeed no," she said, kindly. "And the next best thing would be to let us get away from this terrible place. I am well now; I am, indeed. I shall have no relapse. The sights and doings of the set here make me miserable. Let us try some other place, and if it does not suit, I will promise you to come back here."

"Yes," he said, eagerly, "it *is* a loathsome spot. Why should we be bound to it, if, as you say, you are quite well? I am as sick of it as you, and you know, though I have my weakness, why it is I have stayed here so long. Indeed, there was but that one reason."

"This is Thursday," she said, her cold face lighting up. "It is years since we were in Paris. Why not say Monday, and let us start?"

“With all my heart,” he said. “Monday for Paris ! ”

“Good, kind brother,” she said, and went away with a light heart.

## CHAPTER VI.

“ COZ CONSTANCE.”

HE remained walking up and down. In a few minutes he said, suddenly, “ Yes, we must do it; it is the best course ! ”

Suddenly the maid entered and put a note into his hand. He started as he saw the writing, and went hastily to the lamp to read it. It ran :

“ Dearest Mr. West,—I have been miserable since you left, about the way I spoke to you to-night—the light, cruel, and unkind way—and papa too !

“ But he has returned so disappointed, and

you know it was not he that was speaking, it was the fatal ‘cherry B.’ For myself, I could cry with repentance and grief.

“The truth is—shall I tell you? When you are by, I feel a power that I know may be too strong for me one day, and, perhaps, I think that this sort of manner may be the best defence. For oh! you are so clever and wise, and I cannot bear to think of my own inferiority, when you are by. Now, I tell you this, though so much against myself; and if I give way again, you have leave to quote my own confession against me, and so keep me in order, mind!

“If you do not write me back a line, at once, to say you have forgiven me, I shall lie awake, and be miserable, all to-night, which I am sure you would not wish—though you may like to punish me a little.

“Yours ever sincerely — and repentantly—

“LULU LUCY DACRES.”

"The morning after, when the change in Mr. Elliot's views was as he made the almost same—then I might say—"

"I never can be so ignorant," he said. "Neither was he, though he knew that 'lying round the night' was one of those eager suggestions which was characteristic of Lady. She would have dropped asleep after, say, 'an hour's misery.'—Enter now his sister, with a little say."

"I have been speaking to them below," she said. "It came in them with a great shock, but they say they will let us off with a month's rent."

"My dear Margaret," he said, eagerly, "we have changed all that, as these French would say. This has come in since. Will you now trust my better judgment? *Now* will you call it folly?"

She looked at the writing, and threw it on the table impatiently. "Indeed I *do* call it the worst of folly—madness and incontinence. Do you mean to tell me—you,

Gilbert, a sensible man of middle age, that you have been changed by a string of nonsense like this? What cunning! How artful!

He was in good humour, and could be superior to her now. “Well, since you ask me, Margaret, I *am* a little changed; at least, we shall not leave this on Monday. There is no such *violent* hurry. The good people here would give out all sorts of things—we had come in for a fortune, or were running away to avoid being arrested.”

“I see it is no use arguing with you now,” said she, angrily. “But remember, I tell you this will all end fatally; and you will be sorry, one day, you did not listen to my advice. And when you are in your next fit of ‘lows’ and depression—when things have turned with you again, and you see it is all folly and infatuation, expect no sympathy from me!”

“Indeed I will, dear Margaret,” he said, smiling; “and I know I shall get it, too.”

We should have seen the change in Mr. Gilbert West's face as he read; he almost smiled—such a happy look!

“I never am to be deceived,” he said. Neither was he, though he knew that “lying awake all night” was one of those eager exaggerations which was characteristic of Lucy. She would have dropped asleep after, say, “an hour's misery.” Enters now his sister, with a light step.

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He was in good humour, and could be superior to her now. “Well, since you ask me, Margaret, I *am* a little changed; at least, we shall not leave this on Monday. There is no such *violent* hurry. The good people here would give out all sorts of things—we had come in for a fortune, or were running away to avoid being arrested.”

“I see it is no use arguing with you now,” said she, angrily. “But remember, I tell you this will all end fatally; and you will be sorry, one day, you did not listen to my advice. And when you are in your next fit of ‘lows’ and depression—when things have turned with you again, and you see it is all folly and infatuation, expect no sympathy from me!”

“Indeed I will, dear Margaret,” he said, smiling; “and I know I shall get it, too.”

She turned impatiently and left the room. Mr. West was a wise man, and “a deuced long-headed fellow;” could see through an oak panel. But once in a Mahomet’s paradise, all men are pretty much on a level.

The truth was, he had led a very dismal prison sort of life, his mind promenading in flagged whitewashed corridors, and yards. Within the last few months he had come upon the open commons, the green lawns, and found the air sweet and fragrant.

At that moment a light step made him look up, and a third member of this household entered—a pretty reflective face, with black hair, with eyes that she fixed on those she loved with the innocent watchfulness of a dog’s, small in height, and slightly made. This was Constance Hardy, a clergyman’s daughter and third cousin. She had six sisters, and was, of course, intending to be a governess, one day. The only drawback to this step was that *he* did

not approve of it—it was the poorest and most miserable profession in the world; and what Gilbert West said was, for her, inspired wisdom.

He, however, had comforted her by saying that if any one was likely to succeed at such a profession, *she* was, and insisted she should come over and stop with them at least a year, and learn French at the convent close by. The year was nearly run out—the most delightful year of her whole life. The intelligent reader will guess the reason;—at home, in the baby-house of a parsonage, the six sisters had married her again and again to splendid Cousin Gilbert, and had settled to come and stay with her whenever he should open old Westtown. This sort of compliment she had accepted with great pleasure, but sighed over it in private; for the happiness was Utopian, and about as far off as a coronet.

Gilbert West was to her worshipping eyes as full of perfection as any angel. She

knew, too, of that early trouble, now so long, long ago, which had coloured all Cousin Gilbert's life, and she felt every pang that he had felt. Therefore, when she had flown over with delight to Dieppe, she felt a pleasure that he had begun to take interest in the world again; for she had learned to think him a sort of ascetic, who was never to smile again. But, before a few hours had gone by, she found out the reason of this recovery. It gave her a pang; but, as he was her chief thought, her first idea, she soon found a satisfaction in the idea that he was wakening up to life and happiness, and, after a little struggle, reconciled herself to welcoming and forwarding what was so fatal to any little dreams, she may have entertained herself.

It was no wonder that Gilbert himself came to have an affection for her. He knew thoroughly her devotion and interest in him; admired her cleverness; but had

not the faintest idea that her regard for him went beyond mere respect, gratitude, and intellectual admiration.

Margaret West, stiff, cold, unsympathising, save in one object and one direction, could look gently on Constance's affection, which she was shrewd enough to discover from the first. Indeed, it soon came to be her heartiest prayer that he could transfer all that interest to the gentle, trustful creature who so loved him, from the artful, cunning, designing girl who had caught him. She had no jealousy, and tried to be as soft as she could to her.

She even, in an awkward fashion, strove to make opportunities, and, exercising a kindly self-denial, let Constance perform the household offices — breakfast, tea-making, and the like—which were hers properly. Mr. West lived in his own day-dream, which hung as a cloud before his eyes, though he could not be unconscious

of his cousin's ceaseless and gentle devotion, and often said to her suddenly, on discovering some fresh instance :

“You, poor good Coz Constance! Why do you think of such things, and take all this trouble for me? I don't deserve it, and am only a selfish fellow, like the rest of us.”

On this day she, too, saw the brightness and happiness in his face, and her old instinct told her the reason. That is but a poor selfish sort of love, as *she* knew, that can only love when we ourselves have a share in the transaction. She was content—or perhaps had trained herself to be content—at looking on at the little play from round the edge of the scenes—helping, contriving, prompting, but taking no direct part. A kind of sublime, unnatural virtue, it will be said, quite unknown to this earth, and wholly fanciful. She came in, just as Miss West had gone out with a dark and hostile look.

“Margaret has been scolding me, coz,” he said. “She says I am turning a sort of middle-aged fool. You and she will put your heads together presently, and agree in all that.”

“No, indeed,” she said, earnestly; “you have always behaved wisely and well, and have such great sense.”

“Well,” he went on, in a sort of dreamy satisfaction, “I think I *do* know something about character; at least, when I was at the bar, my ‘brethren’ used to tell me so. I feel an interest in that little Lulu, she is so fresh and natural; but Margaret has been conjuring up a terrible picture of coming horrors, madness, misery, and what not. Now sit down there, Cozy Constance, for I know you have an interest in my foolish self, and tell me what you think.”

“I think,” said she, with an enforced earnestness which gave her a little pain, but only for a moment, “that whatever makes you happy, and changes the tone

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and colour of your life, is the best, and *for* the best, and should be done.”

“Well, but about *her*? Is she this sort of witch, this dangerous mermaid, that will by-and-by drag us all on to rocks? Now, *you* know her. Tell me, do you like her? Just read that letter, which has had the effect of sending away poor Margaret in great excitement. Would you say that was artful, or cunning, or acting——”

This was another trial, but she bore it bravely.

“Indeed it is quite genuine,” she said, with the same eagerness. “And I think she is a charming, natural character, that would make any one happy.”

“So I say. I am sure you are right.”

“The only thing is,” she went on, hesitatingly, “she is so young and inexperienced, and so new to the world, that—you won’t think me absurd giving *you* advice, Cousin Gilbert?”

“Dear no,” he said, warmly. “Well?”

“That young girls who have seen nothing are naturally changeable, and the fact of their feeling themselves at all bound would almost make them think it a restraint. So——”

“So! now what on earth are you coming to, wise woman?” he said, in great amusement. “What Rosicrucian refinement are you going to start on me?”

“I mean,” she said, “that I would not think of any promise, or any engagement, or anything of that kind. I would even not seem too anxious to *her*. Because she has seen so few, and if any one else——”

“That was handsome and fine-looking, *I* see,” he said, smiling. “But you are quite right; and though the advice is wonderfully Machiavellian to come from my simple, innocent Coz Constance, still I think it most sensible and judicious, and I will follow it.”

“It is for your own sake,” she said, earnestly. “For Margaret may be right;

and we are both interested in you, and if you play *everything* on a single chance like this——”

He looked grave. “A thousand thanks!”

When she had left, he continued thoughtful. Then said, half aloud: “Most sensible of her. The very thing I was going to do!”

## CHAPTER VII.

## MR. BLACKER'S WALK.

THEY had always bright mornings at the Dieppe colony, and bright as one of these we can see the "trustee of the English chapel," Mr. Blacker, striding, smiling thoughtfully to the painful stones, as if he were saying, "Very good, now—uncommon good, that of Sir Thomas." He had his head in the air, looking from side to side with importance and challenge. He was very busy. Indeed, he was always busy. "They put dreadful work on me for the little returns of the place." Still, he would not

have given it up for the world, and he delighted in saluting, not with obsequiousness but with a prompt confidence, the new arrivals in his old formula: "I am Mr. Blacker, the oldest resident here. I shall make it a point to come and call."

The little maid of the lodgings would come tripping up with the news of M. Blackaire, the unmelodious sound of creaking would follow, and his long person, half stooped, would come in upon the strangers. This was the operation of "finding out about these people." He examined them on their connections, friends, and circumstances. If these are satisfactory; "Oh, my dear madam, we must get you along here. They will be very glad to see you in society. They are difficile, as the people here call it, and it requires nicety. But leave it to me, and I am sure it can be done." The strangers—young ladies, perhaps—are in fluttering delight, having come to a place where they did not "know a

soul," and now see a whole vision of social delights opening.

"Oh, sir, how kind of you."

"Not at all, my dear lady. We must help one another down here, smooth the pillow, and sweeten the path. We'll begin by degrees; get half a dozen of the regular staggers—our best, you know—to call. *I'll* manage that. Once they take you up, it's all right."

This was in the case of "most desirable addition to society." But there were others who came for vulgar economies, and Mr. Blacker, looking round the rather mean apartment with a little alarm and unpleasantness, would stay only a short while, and be dispiriting in his conversation. It was very hard, next to impossible, to get into Dieppe society. "You see, my good lady, questions are asked, and difficulties are made, and Mrs. Dalrymple says she won't call upon any stranger *too* soon; but you'll do very fairly, by-and-by, you know."

Then going home, he tells Mrs. Blacker they are "poor sort of creatures."

We see him on this bright morning posting along with a complimentary smile, looking to the right and left, sometimes speaking to himself. He was walking very fast, for he had great business on hand. The small streets, through which he passed glittered like the little spar boxes they sold in the shops, and these tiny shops with the gay toys they displayed in abundance, with the scanty show of useful necessities, such as a stray silk or two, in a mercer's window, and the half-dozen hats which seemed the hatter's whole stock in trade, looked all on the smallest conceivable scale. Mr. Blacker, old resident as he was, had the deepest contempt for the place. "My dear sir, take the poorest English country town we have, it would buy and sell these creatures ten times over. Take one of our butchers' shops, with our noble beef flabbing about in enormous masses—well,

I go into Schneider's there, corner of Roo Royle, and I see a couple of fellows cutting and picking and slicing at a few little wedges of meat!—"

He had now got to a shop in "Great-street"—no word was hurtled so much through the air as "the Grawn-roo"—over a milliner's, nice and clean-looking. But in the colony, as with the mind, it was only the interior merits that were regarded. We came to a dirty stable, with a butcher's shambles at one side, and passed through a dark smelling door, and so went upstairs to see my Lady M'Callum.

Mr. Blacker passed through the milliner's shop with a lofty manner, saying, "Upstairs—Ong ho? Eh?" He was going to Mrs. Dalrymple and her daughters—a widow lady of good family, who, though she found it convenient to reside at the colony, was *not* reduced, had the art of making herself respected; and if she saved at all, it was with the view of keeping up

her station, by giving little entertainments. She gave quite a tone to the place.

Mr. Blacker, who was good-natured where greater people did not interfere, and where there were no fashionable sick calls, as his visits might be styled, had a sort of liking and respect for these ladies. He was fond of dining, or coming of an evening to have a rubber, and still fonder of a glass of good English sherry, which that lady used to have. The daughters, three in number, were nice, pleasant, and good.

"How are you to-day, ma'am?" he said, wiping his forehead. "Just come in on my rounds, you see."

"Tell us *all* the news, Mr. Blacker," said the youngest.

"See here," said Mr. Blacker, confidentially, but not answering, and coming close to the widow lady, "I want you to do something. Such news! I have just been with the Guernsey Beauforts, the nicest, most charming people I *ever* met. Just come by

the boat. He was a colonel in the army, a tall, haan'some jain-tle-man'y man." Mr. Blacker, in fits of deep admiration, used to drone on his words thus: "She is a real lady, and sweet daughters. One is Victoria, called after our future queen."

"But now, Mr. Blacker," says Mrs. Dalrymple, gravely, "how do you know about them?"

"Oh, there are signs, marks, and tokens. As to manner and an air, there's no mistaking. They're at Pouillac's, ma'am. I took them there myself. Seventy-five francs a week the rascal asked them, though I winked at him. Ma'am, he saw what they were as well as I did. 'But,' says Mr. Beaufort, laying down the first fortnight in advance, 'why, they told me, Mr. Blacker,' says he, 'that this Dieppe was such an extravagant place!'"

"I suppose," said the widow, "you would like us to call on them?"

"Now see," he added, with fresh confi-

dence, "I am just going round to a few at first. Do the thing quietly and gently. It wouldn't do at all to open the flood-gates, and let in the whole canaille on them. Oh, I assure you they are ailelegant people; quiet to a degree; and speak, you know, in the old, quiet, assured way; not like the creatures that brag, and swagger, and have nothing, you know.

"I am going back at two o'clock," continued Mr. Blacker, rising, "for lunch, and then to take him and her round to the shops, to order things. If you only heard the nice modest way they asked me; for Pouillac's would never do, they say. They want furniture of their own. And I—er—told of you, and—er—she said you were the sort of people they would so like to know. And see here, I'll tell you what you'll do, young ladies."

"What, Mr. Blacker? Tell us, do."

"Get mamma to give us a rubber some

night—a quiet, nice thing; will talk over the people; and, ma'am, *I'll* manage the Beauforts. They say they won't go out for a long time, but, I dare say—in fact, I'll go security that you can have them."

"But," said Mrs. Dalrymple, at last called up into something like excitement, "we could only have a little cards, and, perhaps, a song and lemonade——"

Mr. Blacker smiled, and waved her off.

"Now, now, see that! The ve-ry thing which they like. All in good time. I tell you what, I'll just drop in myself to-night for a snug game, and report progress." And Mr. Blacker went his way, leaving the sober but cheerful ladies in not a little excitement.

He went off on other duty. This busy gentleman firmly believed that these were important offices, and that, in carrying them out, he was overworked. He might be pardoned for this curious delusion.

As we go his way, and with him look up

to this window and that, we might wish for some convenient Asmodeus, who would open the front on a hinge, baby-house fashion, and give a glimpse of the queer people, the queer crooked sticks, that have been flung across the straits, and the queerer shifts going on there.

Here, in this narrow house, built like a thin wiry man, lives DOCTOR MACAN—one of the English doctors, but from Ireland—with a wife who brings from Erin the almost too genial fertility of that land; for the doctor was “struggling,” as he himself once remarked pathetically, “against” no less than eight children. The last child came about two years ago; but, he added, “there was no knowing the moment when Mrs. Macan might take it into her head to begin again.” That was a sufficient grievance; but a worse one was WHITE, the new English doctor, who had lately come to settle—a single man, of easy address and pleasant manners. “Really

a most amusing creature," some ladies said. He could be gallant, too, and there were some of the younger girls not displeased to be rallied on the single doctor's attentions.

In a dearth of beaux, many inferior articles rise in value, just as political economists tell us the price of second-class land governs the amount of rent. In that little hotbed of scandal and malignant whispering, the new doctor did not asperse his rival. He would merely say Doctor Macan was very good and very sound in his way; but, naturally, newer things had come out since Doctor Macan had been at home, and he could not be expected to be up to the present state of science.

I am sorry to say that Doctor Macan did not reciprocate this handsome tone on the part of his rival—enemy, rather, as he considered him; his language was not regulated as it should have been. "An infernal stuck-up scheming puppy, with as much

knowledge of physic as was in his—"Doctor Macan's" little finger. A mere charlatan, sir, with a soft-sawder manner. Wait. We'll hear of something one of these fine mornings." But the only thing we did hear was that Doctor White was every day doing better and better. "Eating into my practice," said Doctor Macan; and alas! eating into the clothes and meat of Fanny, and Jacky, and Paddy, and a little girl called "Dulia." Worst of all, it did seem as though Mrs. Macan were really making up her mind to begin again. Poor Doctor Macan! Of course Mr. Blacker went with the new doctor. Had not Lady M'Callum sent for him in the vapours, and spoken of him languidly as very painstaking and clever? "Poor Macan!" Mr. Blacker would say, "he was very well in his day; but the man is literally overrun with children"—as if *this* were a glaring deficiency in medical knowledge. As nothing succeeds like success, so nothing fails like

failure; and people began to fancy, from his practice falling off, that there was a decay also in his skill. This is the story of one house.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## MORE CHARACTER.

GOING along with the clergyman, we can see him look up at another window, and we know that there lives "M. Pequinet," the French doctor—"a poor sort of three-franc fellow," who, indeed, Mr. Blacker gives out, will take anything that you have handy—a crust of bread, half a bottle of wine. This slander, when repeated to both the English doctors, was all but encouraged, and Doctor Macan said "he wouldn't put it past him." They wouldn't "meet him in consultation;" and just as the English

clergyman contrived to make dissenters of the mere local clergy, so the foreign doctors quite degraded the native faculty into poor intruders and charlatans. Wonderful English! and, best of all gifts, their admirable self-confidence and belief, that *they* are the best men everywhere. It is worth gold, silver, and precious stones, because it brings them all these.

More Asmodean peeps—the Place with the good apartments, where the Wests lived and at whom Mr. Blacker mentally pulled a face. Gilbert West never paid homage to Mr. Blacker, could not conceal a certain impatience in his presence, and in his absence spoke of him with freedom. “This sort of man degrades us before foreign nations.” With much more to the same effect.

Now, at the corner, Mr. Blacker sees coming out of a house a clergyman of another denomination—a tall figure, dressed pretty much like himself, only with a swarthy Spanish tint in the face, and glossy

black hair curling up at the back of his neck.

“ Good evening, Mussier Pigou,” he said to him as he would to a rather “ slow ” dissenting clergyman at home. (This was the invariable genteel English pronunciation of that day, not the vulgar *mounseer*. The foreigners accepted it with grave respect, and were regularly “ mussiered.”) “ Evening, Pigou,” repeated he, with a curt wave of his arm. “ Where do *you* come from now ? ”

M. Pigou knew English tolerably (he was a Strasburgan, not a pure Frenchman); but, indeed, most of the French there were obliged to apply themselves to our tongue.

M. Pigou was the Lutheran pasteur of the place, a handsome man, with no congregation to speak of. Mr. Blacker always addressed him with respect. There was a history about him; but here, every one had a queer history. The only difference was in the degree of queerness. “ Mussier Piggoo,”

so handsome, so Velasquez-looking, so sad, so misunderstood, so dreamy at times, and so agreeable and vivacious when he chose, was living away from his wife, with whom, alas! he found it impossible to be vivacious, or dreamy, or sentimental, or even handsome. It was understood that she was a poor, sensible, matter-of-fact creature, without a faculty beyond clothes and dinner, and looking after their three children who lived with her now at Rouen. The pastor often was induced to tell his sad story to the young ladies, and excited the deepest interest.

He had always a little *tendresse* of some kind on hand, or several, running on, as it were, together; and it must not be imagined that there was anything incorrect in the young virgins of the place, who rallied each other, and were jealous of the attentions of this gentleman. The tone of the place was so odd, and gossip—i.e. scandal—so rife, that it was impossible for the most

strict not to fall in with it, and be effleuré to a certain degree, but no further; and thus, reversing the common maxim, Virtue, paying this little homage to Vice, was allowed to go its own way, and live in tranquillity and unharmed.

To the Dalrymple family, M. Pigou was specially devoted. The three girls were all handsome and interesting, with a certain spiritual air and speech which made them yet more attractive. They were Catholics, but, in this community, religion never entered a moment into consideration, virtue again paying this trifling tax to her enemy. The pastor, sitting on a low chair, with his eyes fixed on Madeleine, the eldest, used to sometimes talk “beautifully,” sometimes, on a sort of general and half-amatory principle, saying, “I often wish we had some of your religion. I should like people coming to lay open their hearts to me; I should like to lay open mine. If Madeleine came to me——” Then good Mrs. Dalrymple,

greatly pleased, would enlarge on the subject, hoping to sow the good seed, not thinking that this was all the mere *theatricals* of conversation, and that the pastor was, if anything, known to be strongly prejudiced.

“With his languishing eyes and his voice,” said Captain Filby very often, “do you know, the fellow often reminds me of the man that wrote all that about the Grisettes and the starling. What’s his name? Sterne! Sterne! that’s the man. He’s so like Sterne!”

What elements, we say again, dramatic enough to make a hundred French plays! for not much is wanted to make an English one. What decayed leading ladies, what battered sou-less jeunes premiers!

Mr. Blacker passed a hundred little gargets high up in the air, where these unhappy exiles were burrowing, struggling through life somehow; now making jubilee on the arrival of a few pieces from the

Happy Land, and coming forth as gay and in the best they could muster, as Mr. Wilson or Mr. Rupert Smith, and talking boastfully of "getting back to England—next month, *or so*"—an important qualification. They were received without question or inquiry, until the time of want again came on, and they had to burrow back again. So with the decayed families struggling desperately, and fighting on—on a crust. The De Courcys, the Fitzmaurice Cravens, the Percy Grosvenors, the Langham Ryders, and many more, who entered gloriously, with sails and colours flying, and gradually sank into poor dirty condemned colliers.

Still the tone of the public was generous, or rather, there was a secret understanding in the interest of all, that no one should be put on trial, no unworthy inquisition set on foot (always provided that nothing herein contained should be to the prejudice of scandal and gossip), or the result used in evidence against them. Once

a fair appearance was made, society was satisfied. Hence came the value of that gathering at the Port; hence every nerve was strained to put in an appearance there, and hold your own on the Prado.

Alas! the privations, the sore but genteel want, the pauperism, the desperate shifts, the mean resources of this colony, if all collected, would fill up one of the bitterest cups or caldrons known upon earth. Yet it was not the fault of the natives. They were enduring, kindly, self-denying, hoping against hope, and absurdly trustful. Where they found a true gentleman and family reduced and suffering, they were polite, and generous, and forbearing. And though rueful, would accept excuses for deferred payment cheerfully, again and again. Generations of shabby swindling English succeeding each other, overtaxed their patience, and have made them what they are now, suspicious, greedy, and merciless.

Mr. Blacker, having gone his rounds,

looked in here, and had a word: "My dear ma'am—such an addition—charming people—the nicest—highly connected. Dempsey my good friend, just go and leave your card—the nicest people—just come. I want to get a few—you know—just to help them on at first." Then he finished at the consul Dick's office, pushing his way through people who were ordering wine, asking information, and bursting with complaints. "Here, Dick, a word with you a moment; a very important matter. Just step in with me." Then confidentially: "See here, Dick, some first-rate people just come; and we must help them along in every way. Really good people. Let Mrs. Dick call early; *they'll like it*, I've reason to know."

Having got through a deal of "work" in the morning, Mr. Blacker went back to his new friends. They were really high-bred-looking people, according to the Dieppe standard—Mr. Beaufort particularly, and his brother, Ernest Beaufort, both very tall

and "officer-looking." Ernest showed the deepest contempt for the place, walking about with sourness in his face, and loudly expressing his disgust—behaviour which at once made him an object of interest to the colony, and showed them that he *really* belonged to high life. Little Miss Beaufort was "an elegant child," and her mamma was presently to be pronounced the perfection of lady-like elegance.

## CHAPTER IX.

## A PROPOSAL.

MR. GILBERT WEST, with a face at least a year younger in its expression, than it was the night before, was in his apartments about two o'clock on the same day, reading an English newspaper with some distraction, for his mind was travelling away to other things more delightful. There was an under-current of complacency, because he now felt that his judgment had not been at fault.

Suddenly Mr. Dacres, "Dacres the Delightful," as some admirers called him,

came in, with his cheerful face composed almost to an expression of sorrow. He held his hand out : " My dear West, I have come to you to speak about last night. I can't say how grieved I am. The fact is, I am worried, harassed, hunted from post to pillar, and heart-sick and weary. My dear West, say you won't give it a thought, say you have forgotten, and let the dead past bury its own dead ! " (Many a jury had heard this fine expression.)

" My dear Dacres, to be sure," said Mr. West ; " it all passed from my mind in a second. I knew it was only the forgetfulness of the moment."

" Generous, generous always. Not a speck to stain the pure glass. As my Lulu said to me, ' Mr. West, papa is too noble not to dismiss it from his mind.' God help me, West, but I am in a miserable way."

The other looked grave. He knew this exordium pretty well.

" Such a time as I had of it over there.

*They* don't know. I wouldn't they did for worlds. No, let me suffer ; but keep it from them, West, my poor darlings at home. Most of this time, when they thought I was amusing myself, canvassing for parliament, dining out, and all that, where do you suppose I was—in all the horrors of quod, sir.”

This was true, and a very cheerful fortnight Mr. Dacres had spent in the White-cross Prison of that day.

“It is very unfortunate,” said Mr. West, gravely ; “but I really don't know what to say. I have so often given advice, and——”

“You have, you have,” said the other, “and it is none of your fault. Only all I am anxious for is, to keep this from my own darling, at home. I have no spirits to carry it off. Would to Heaven I had ! Yet, what must I appear to *them* ? There's the thing. Poor little Lulu ; what a home for her ! She's not happy, West. Do you

know, I remark a change in her since I have been away—marks as if a struggle were going on in her—a restless manner, a distrait look.”

Mr. West had said many times over that he knew the character of Mr. Dacres in all its depths ; that he was never taken in a moment, by his sham bonhomie, or maudlin warmth. Yet, at this moment, he was all interest and belief. Mr. Dacres saw it too. He looked round mysteriously.

“Shall I tell you what I suspect—what I know ? Would I be thus frank with any other man but yourself, West ? Would I taint her pure name by dragging it into such a humiliating confession ? But it is in her interest, and I don’t care what construction any man may put on it. You know my heart. Come here, West. I found it out before I was two hours in the house. I know her little secret.”

“Good Heavens !” said Mr. West, really agitated, “what do you mean ?”

“What do I mean? I mean that I am glad and proud to know it; more glad than if I had one of their thousand-franc pieces in my hand this moment. My dear West, do you suppose a man like me, that has knocked about, browbeaten witnesses, and been browbeat myself by infernal tyrants of judges—that have been playing ‘catch you, catch me,’ with duns all my life—do you suppose I haven’t learnt the use of my eyes yet? Ah, West, my dear fellow! I assure you, when I found it out, it sent a film of joy into this battered heart of mine.”

“But,” said Mr. West, now recovered, “I must ask you to speak out—to be more clear. I may have an idea, but——”

“My dear, kind, old friend,” said Mr. Dacres, rising to take his hand, “she loves you; my Lulu loves you with the whole of her fresh young heart; and I vow,” he added, suddenly turning to jocose, “I could just strike up, ‘Tol de lol lol,’ like the old fathers in the play, I am so glad of it!”

Mr. West grew collected and cold. "I should be delighted if it were so," he said; "but I may ask, how do you know—how are you sure?"

"My dear fellow, we are both men of the world—at least *you* are. I have picked up something in my day—but no matter. What I have told you, I *know*. I assure you, I have thought the thing over often, the long nights when they had me, in that *quod* of a place over there. And when I considered what *was* to become of them if I was removed in any other way, it used to drive me mad almost. Then I used to pray some good, sensible, practical, matured man would be raised up, that my little Lulu could lean on; not a whipper-snapper who would neglect her, perhaps, or use her ill; but a *man* sir, young, too, but past folly. I don't care about myself. I am weary of the whole thing. All I ask now, is my little six feet by two of mother earth. That won't cost much. But it would be a

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“What do I mean? I mean that I am glad and proud to know it; more glad than if I had one of their thousand-franc pieces in my hand this moment. My dear West, do you suppose a man like me, that has knocked about, browbeaten witnesses, and been browbeat myself by infernal tyrants of judges—that have been playing ‘catch you, catch me,’ with duns all my life—do you suppose I haven’t learnt the use of my eyes yet? Ah, West, my dear fellow! I assure you, when I found it out, it sent a film of joy into this battered heart of mine.”

“But,” said Mr. West, now recovered, “I must ask you to speak out—to be more clear. I may have an idea, but——”

“My dear, kind, old friend,” said Mr. Dacres, rising to take his hand, “she loves you; my Lulu loves you with the whole of her fresh young heart; and I vow,” he added, suddenly turning to jocose, “I could just strike up, ‘Tol de lol lol,’ like the old fathers in the play, I am so glad of it!”

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comfort to me to know she was being taken care of."

"Most true and a most just feeling," said the other, hurriedly; "but one thing I should like to know. On what is all this founded? For there should be something more——"

"Well, I'll tell you; and I don't care about the shame of it. But candour is my maxim. I know what you'll say—unfair, shabby, and all that. So it was. But I couldn't help it. I had a struggle for it. But I am a weak, helpless creature when it comes to that. Well, West, see here. This is the poor little thing's diary——"

"Oh!" said Mr. West, starting back; "you couldn't bring yourself to pry into *that*——"

"I knew he'd take it this way," said Mr. Dacres, sadly. "I am a wretched fellow, I know. But here it is for you in her own black and white: 'I am fighting against

the influence'—the creature. 'He controls me with a look'——"

"I cannot," said Mr. West, walking about in great agitation. You must not try me in this way. It was very wrong. It is not fair to her."

"No more it is," said Mr. Dacres, gazing at the book with a sort of stupid ruefulness; "no more it is. See here again: 'I was rude to him, because I dare not trust myself.' Well, all I say is, take what view you like of it, West. I know it's all for you, and that's what I've to say. I couldn't see her wasting before my eyes and not interfere, even in my own awkward way. I mean well. But there's the truth for you; and whatever way you take it, my dear fellow, it will be all one to the poor devil now addressing you, who hasn't a napoleon at this moment he can call his own."

That impoverished condition of things did not last more than five minutes, when a happier train of thought set in:

“You are a good angel, a generous friend indeed; and I’ll never forget your kindness.”

“Don’t mention it,” said Mr. West, hastily; “but I hardly know what to say or to do. All I beg of you is, do nothing more in the matter—for a time, at least. I would not for the world there should be interference with her. I must beg—implore of you.”

“Take time—that’s just what I want. Not a blessed word shall pass my lips, you may depend. I give you my oath. But come up as usual; mind we’ll look out for you. Come to-day at four, and talk to them, for I am not in spirits.”

When Dacres had gone, West, as it were, resolved himself into a council. Gauging, as he did to the utmost nicety, the height and depth, the habitual exaggeration of Mr. Dacres, he felt, by comparison of other things with the letter of the night before, that what had been described, must be true.

Applying the same test—her looks, her strange embarrassments, her wilfulness, and impatience—considering these as he would a legal case sent to him for advice and opinion, he could not but feel that he had some warrant for his wishes. But he was quite convinced when he came to picture her in that dismal home, with that father who, barely tolerable now in his strange fluctuations of good humour and maudlin depression, would with years grow worse, and turn their house into an abode of tipsy squalor and disorder—the most miserable surrounding in the world for a young creature. Then those odious words of his sister—“at your time of life,” and “double her age”—came back on him with a sort of chill; but again he brought his quiet legal examination to bear, putting the most strength against himself. After all, he surprised himself saying “Forty-two is not so old a man.”

Mr. Dacres went home with alacrity, merely pausing on his way to have a little

sup of the cherry B., the only thing, as he said, that could put heart into a poor persecuted creature like himself. He was now in spirits.

"By Jove!" he said, "I think I hit the jury hard there. That touch about the diary would have carried the case; it was risky, Harco Dacres, but beautifully done—exquisitely neat. Here's the use of knowing human nature. I knew he'd be too high-toned, too delicate, to look at my Loo's scribbling. So far, so good. But I have the real pinch before me now."

What the real pinch was we shall see shortly.

He went home whistling and singing,

"There's a light in her eye  
That mirrors the sky,  
And she is the loveliest girl of them all"—

an amatory song, which he gave with great feeling and rollicking affection at the bar dinners. Strange to say, no one ever

reckoned on strains of a comic sort from that capital boon companion; and it does somehow seem appropriate that creatures like the delightful barrister should contribute strains rather of sentiment.

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## CHAPTER X.

“POOR PAPA.”

MISS LULU was in their little but bright drawing-room, which by her long residence had gained all its brightness and daintiness. She was looking after her flowers, trimming up, giving a touch here, a touch there, when her parent came in. “Oh, papa,” she cried, “how happy I am! so delighted to have you here again; and we’ll take our first walk together down to the Port to-day. Shan’t we, papa?”

Mr. Dacres, who had with difficulty

checked himself from again bursting into the most cheerful troll about

The light in her eye  
That mirrors the sky

as he came up-stairs, now became intensely, suddenly gloomy and desponding.

"My poor Lulu, I have been thinking of you all day: taking you about with me on my lonely round—my lonely round."

Another of the songs was near intruding—the ever-popular "All's well." Lucy laid down her sewing hastily, and ran to kiss him. She became conscious of very recent "cherry B.," but it did not for a moment weaken her faith in his grief.

"Well, dear," he went on, "you love poor old papsy, don't you, in spite of all his short-comings, which are enough, Heaven knows?"

"My dear old Harco, I shall always be your little Lulu, no matter what you are, no matter what little troubles come. You

must make up your mind to have me always with you."

"No, dear no," he said, hastily. "Oh, not for the world, my child. That's what's been in my mind all this long time away in England, when you and your poor mamma thought, naturally, I was amusing myself getting made into an M.P., and all that. I didn't like to distress your poor little heart last night, by talking of my own selfish troubles; but I assure you I was busy with a very different set of electors. Ah! it's weary, weary work."

Lucy understood perfectly, and stood looking at him with the deepest grief and mortification.

"The worst, my child, yes, the worst your little heart can conjure up. Only nothing to mamma about it. Hush! Nothing to poor mamma. I'll get used to it in time, I dare say. It's only a little humiliating at first. But I believe it can be managed privately and delicately. Oh dear,

yes! And in the end you come rather to like it. Ah, may you never know what *quod* is!”

She was listening as if something was piercing her slowly, her eyes distending, her chest heaving.

“Indeed, my poor child,” he went on, “I never thought it would have come to *that*; never indeed. I suppose their unclean touch will cleave to me for many a long day; but I suppose more of it’s before me. So I had best accustom myself in time. People think because I keep up a show of fun and jollity, that Harcourt Dacres is case-hardened; but the iron has now entered my soul—the iron has entered my soul.” He seemed to dwell with satisfaction on the intrusion of this foreign body, and repeated the phrase over several times. What he hinted at completely overwhelmed his daughter. She remained gazing at him with such a look of hopeless misery, that he was distressed.

“And what’s to become of the poor hunted papa,” he went on, “I’m sure I can’t say. Once this has set in, I’m sure it’ll go on. Once the ice is broken, you know, pet—— Well, I’ll tell you what was coming home to me all that time. I was thinking what *was* to become of my poor little Lulu! Was I to have you sinking—sinking before my eyes, with a shabby struggling going on, and a mouldiness spreading over you? Would to Heaven, I’d say to myself, I could see her well married to a sound, faithful, sensible, well-to-do man, and then she’d be saved from all this profanation, as I call it, and perhaps save her poor broken father too. Give him a start like a gentleman.

“My goodness, Lulu,” he went on, rising suddenly, and walking about, “that is only what I want—a start—a start. All these men say to me—great swells, too—‘Dacres, my boy, if you had your arms free, you’d have the game in your hands.’ There it is.

I know I have. I don't want those fools to tell me so. Which of them can touch me at a speech, I'd like to know? Not a man of 'em could humbug a jury as I can. Why, I'd go ahead, like a comet with a fiery tail, and have them all staring after me, and saying, 'Who the devil's that fellow?' But the next thing is, where's the start to come from? Instead of that, it will get worse and worse, and every day a worse and worse decay.”

That word seemed to make her shrink again. What he had said about “unclean touch” came on her like a weight. Answering her own thoughts more than him, she said, hurriedly :

“Let us escape from *that*. Oh yes, at all risks. I would do anything in the world——”

“Then tell me now, dear,” said he, suddenly, “now you like him—our friend, that——”

“Mr. West?” she said.

"That's it," said he, "that is what I have set my old broken heart on. *There's* a man, sensible, clever, wise, that any girl in the United Kingdom might be proud to get. That's what would be the making of you, and of us all; that's what would rejoice papa's poor hunted heart! Then *adieu* to the persecutions, and we'd all live happily together for ever and ever after, without a care, 'in sæcula sæculorum!'"

"Ah! papa," said she, hastily, "I would do anything to save us from that thing you spoke of——"

"Hush!" said her father; "never go back to that, my dear; we've done with our friend *quod, I hope*. But he loves you. A heart of steel—true to the very core—any girl might be proud to win him. Just the right age too—say over thirty. Why, I wouldn't see you joined to one of those schoolboy whipper-snappers; no, I'd sooner see you single all your life. Aye! But you know it—you've found it out long ago. Don't tell

me; only half an hour ago he came to me with his little story, and I felt for him, I did, Lulu. You know he seemed to feel sore: he's as tender and delicate an organization as a child.”

“I didn't mean to say anything to hurt him; no, indeed,” said she, eagerly. “He is the last person in the world I would like to wound. And I wrote to him to say so.”

Mr. Dacres's eyes twinkled. “Ah, *that* was what brought him to it. I see now; I was wondering——”

“And, papa,” she said, thoughtfully, “and he really made you this proposal to-day?”

“Solemnly and seriously, he did.”

“I like him,” she went on in some agitation, “and always did, and admire him, too—his great gifts, his talents, his honour; but——”

“But what, my dear? I know now what's passing in that little mind of yours; you never let this next or nigh you? Eh?”

You'd have gone on without thinking more of it? Eh? You don't feel that burning affection — the lying awake at nights? Why, that's all gone out now, *that's* only in the novels and foolish school-girls' heads! As for waiting for a beautiful man to rise out of the earth and perform prodigies, and full of lovely sentiment and a low voice, *that*, my dear, is a luxury only for the rich and comfortable—we're not entitled to that.”

“No, papa,” she said, with a little vehemence. “I am no fool of that sort, thank Heaven! But this is so strange — so odd——”

“Strange! nonsense! Why, haven't I seen it over and over again? Wasn't there little Bolton, on the circuit, a man of a good sound fifty years, if he was a day; but as clever and sweet a minded fellow as ever held a brief. Well, when he met a pretty little girl, who would have died outright if she had not married him, no one

was in the least surprised. There was Roper, fifty-six if he was an hour; he and his wife, a child of twenty or a little over. I could give you cartloads of instances; and take it at the worst, my dear, is it such a punishment for a set of paupers like us? for we are that, Heaven knows. And not one that's gone through what I have! The quod and——”

She answered him quickly :

“ Yes, yes, papa; anything but that. I am sure I could be happy with him; he is so kind, and noble, and generous; and I promise you I will try my best to do what you say. It is the best and only course—I am *sure* of it; and I shall begin to understand it all soon.”

Mr. Dacres, quite overcome at this unexpected adhesion, folded her in his arms and clasped her to his breast.

“ You are a good-natured sensible child,” he said, “ and I am proud of you indeed. There is not one girl in a hundred—ay, in a

hundred thousand—would have the tact to do as you have done. You are as wise as a woman twenty years older, and will be rewarded for it, mind I tell you; for when they marry their young skipjacks, who soon lead them a life, you will have a steady, clever, faithful man, who will never forget you, and make it the study of his life to reward you. I declare I feel as light as a feather after this. I shall sleep—oh, *so* lightly!—to-night, Petsy."

This result was nothing very special, as the learned gentleman, even at the most critical seasons, never lost an hour's repose.

"You know," she said, with a smile, "I don't want to have you think of any grand sacrifice, or anything of *that* sort; only what you have said has come as a sort of surprise to me. I know this, I am always so glad when Mr. West comes, and find great delight in listening to him, and am a little sorry when he goes away. So I suppose——"

"Ah! go 'long, you little humbugging witch, you! Why, that's love — love all over!"

"Hush, papa!" she said, looking round. "No—it is regard—esteem; but no matter. Only, dearest, you must promise me this—you must wait, and let matters take their own way. Leave it all to me."

"'Deed, then, I will," he said, patting her head; "and it couldn't be in better hands. I'll move neither hand, leg, nor foot in it."

He was greatly pleased, and went up to "dress" — an operation only kept for seasons of high festival. When he came down he stood before Lucy, looking at her with admiration.

"My Lulu, you'll be as pretty as any of the women going—when we have you Mrs. West, of Westtown. Won't we keep out all?—no more duns, debts, or bai——ahem. I'll go bail for that, pet, I mean."

Then, as he drew on his gloves, Mr.

Dacres' head went on one side, and he sang to her with admiration,

"Oh, no, I cannot sti-he-fle—  
Ah! yes, I long to ri-he-fle  
That little part  
They call the heart,  
Of *you* my lovely tri-he-fle."

And he patted her under the chin.

"Where on earth, Harco," said Lucy, laughing, "do you pick up those odd songs?"

When he had gone his way chanting, the young girl sank down in a chair very thoughtfully, and, with something like youthful wrinkles on her forehead, remained thinking for nearly half an hour. Her young head was working the thing out—a habit of hers. At last she heard the French clock strike; it was getting to the time for the "Corso," and she rose, saying softly, "*That* degradation would kill me! Anything to save us from *that*!"

## CHAPTER XI.

## HAPPINESS.

MR. BLACKER'S private trumpeting on behalf of his new friends—the captain coarsely called it “touting”—had been attended with such success, that when the hour for Prado drew near and the packet was not an hour off, the Port had become unnaturally crowded, and then a buzz and hum of voices to this tune and key “Have you seen them?” “Rolling in gold. The nicest people in the world.” “Very highly connected.” “Going to spend a long time here.” Presently, those passing and re-

passing, four and three abreast, were excited by knowing that the moment had at last come.

For Mr. Blacker now appeared in charge of a party—new faces, new figures, new dresses; waving, and flourishing, and pointing, and declaiming. He was in great spirits, radiant with pride and proprietorship. Curiosity in the community was always allowed to gratify itself without regard to restraint. Every one might rush, crowd, or stare as eagerly as they pleased. Voices were not lowered, and the strangers heard distinctly as they passed by, “There they are! Those are they!”

They walked on with the indifference of perfect good breeding, perhaps a little amused and smiling, as all “nice” well-bred people are. The tall and “prince-like” Mr. Guernsey Beaufort and his brother Ernest—two about as fine and elegant men as had ever appeared at Dieppe—attracted all eyes; and the scorn and con-

tempt with which the latter looked round on every one, and everything, showed the true club man, and man of fashion, and was the real guarantee for their elegance and respectability.

Mrs. Beaufort, too—a pale graceful woman, with a shawl draped about her—swept along on her husband's arm, looking gently about, and the ladies of the colony felt with an instinct that here was a secret reserve—the reserve of true breeding—which would keep them at a distance. She had her little girl—a charming, elegant, well brought up little thing—walking beside her.

“You see them all now,” said Mr. Blacker, flourishing and doing the panorama-describer's part. “Of course this is the public ground,” he added to them, apologising for the mixture, “and it is not considered anything, meeting in this way; and of course it leads to nothing. By the way, I see, coming down, some very fair,

well-conducted people—I mean the Harcourt Dacres, one of the good Irish families. He's a *very* clever fellow—in Cases, you know, he——Yes, I think there would be no harm in——Dacres, a word with you."

It was Mr. Dacres and his daughter, with Mr. West, that were coming up. People who were not too absorbed by the great excitement of the evening had noticed the change in Mr. West's face, and some one said "he looked twenty years younger." He had indeed lost the reflective, dry, almost dissatisfied look which was his characteristic, and he seemed overflowing with spirits and happiness—indeed, about his own natural age, if not some years younger.

The new and distinguished comers remarked him. "Oh," said the clergyman, waving him off, "one of the set, you know. They keep up a sort of position here, and all that; but a little unpleasant to deal with. *You* understand me, Mrs. Beaufort? You know all this sort of thing. Dacres,

one word." And he seized that gentleman by the arm. "See here, Dacres." Then, in a melodramatic whisper, he poured into his ear, "Really charming people—first society. Mr. Harcourt Dacres, Miss Dacres, let me introduce Mr. Guernsey Beaufort."

This ceremony was watched by many eager faces. Mr. Blacker was almost agitated as he went through this chamberlain's function. The parties then joined. Mrs. Beaufort looked with interest towards Lucy, as indeed every one did who met her. The fashionable lady's face grew softer, and seemed, among all the false countenances about her, to have lighted on something that sympathized. The two in a moment separated, and with the little girl walked behind.

Mr. Dacres was delighted. He loved new faces and good people. His countenance mantled with cordiality, and bonhomie seemed to stream from his mouth. "Men

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of the world, sir," he said, "understand each other instantly. You and I, Mr. Beaufort, put up with all this, because it suits us. It's a poor place, Heaven knows; but we run hither and thither just as fashion bids us. You and I know how a well-known marchioness will go into a cabin we'd be ashamed to put our manservant in, if it's the right thing to do it. And I can tell you a good deal of fun goes on here, in its way. There are the queerest, most comical set of souls, in the universe. It's worth the while of a man like you, Mr. Beaufort, coming here for a time, to see a bit of character. I run over here myself, now and again, to see my girl and wife and I find it *impayable*, for the stories and all that sort of thing I pick up as I go. Capital schools here, too. My little girl is just leaving Miss Pringle's, where she has been well grounded, I assure you. Quite a finish, you know, you don't get at home."

Now come up the Dalrymples. "Very

nice, correct people. I was telling you of them, you know. Perfectly safe to know. Not exactly reduced; but, a — Mrs. Dalrymple, let me——” And the form was gone through with all the solemnities. The faded lady, in the sweeping shawl, seemed to find comfort in the good-natured, all but homely manner of Mrs. Dalrymple, and “took to her” at once.

“’Pon my word,” said Mr. Blacker, looking round with pride at his work, “our party *has* increased!”

It had indeed. The commons of the place looked at, and followed them, with fresh curiosity. Mr. Blacker waving his arms and describing, with his head very much back; the two matrons already confidential; the Beaufort daughter and Mr. Ernest Beaufort keeping aloof contemptuously from the other ladies; and our Lucy almost ignored. Mr. Dacres was soaring up fast into his best circuit vein, and, with his face mantling with joviality, was telling “a

capital thing," taking in the ladies right and left, and even those behind him. He delighted in new people and new audiences, was now quite at home.

Mr. West and Lucy had dropped behind. Both felt they were outside all this. They were of the class of natures which are too delicately organized to "hit it off" with strangers, and to be at home in a moment with all the world.

"I cannot endure that man," Mr. West said to her. "He jars on me at every turn. It is he who makes this place worse than it would be."

"Poor Blacker?" said Lucy; "surely there is no harm in him?"

"Perhaps not," said he, smiling. "I always think that the people with no harm in them, do the most harm."

"Oh," said Lucy, sadly, "it seems to me every day, now that I have done with the school, to be worse. It is a dreadful place, and I wish we were far away out of it."

Papa, and we all, would be so much happier established at some quiet, sweet, little English country place."

They were a long way behind now. West looked round hastily. "And why should this not be?" he said. "It is indeed no place for you—or for *him*. The very air is corrupted. Their false patience, their miserable acting, the crowd of knaves—the men and women that herd together here—sicken me. It is like living in a moral pestilence."

"But *you* stay here?" said Lucy, quickly. "You can be free if you like. And a philosopher like you!" But, as soon as the words escaped her, she recollected and coloured.

He said hurriedly, "Perhaps I cannot, though I ought, indeed. My poor sister would rather be away, a million times. She is pining for home. I myself loathe the place; and yet I stay—selfishly, I know, but still I cannot help it. Can you guess the reason?"

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the reason?"

Lucy looked at him with full and trustful eyes. "Well—I——can," she answered, "and I *do* know it."

"And what do you call it—folly, selfishness, absurdity, a foolish dream?"

She paused a moment, and then said softly, "No, I do not think so, since you have asked me. Far from it."

"Your father and I," he went on very quickly, "had a short conversation to-day. I told him what has long been on my mind. Now, let me speak plainly for myself. Things will grow worse and worse. This is but the beginning. Your poor father is helpless, and I have met enough of men of his life, to know, that the troubles he has passed through are but a hint of what are to come. In such a prospect I think of *you*—of what is to become of you later, and of him. Friends will fall away, miseries of all sorts will set in; then you *must* have a friend. Some one to turn to and protect you—and *him*," he added.

“I have thought of all this; but you cannot think me so mercenary as to suppose I would let such motives influence me. No. You must consider I am only a mere school-girl, and that I hardly know how to form a judgment on things of the world. This has all come on me very suddenly. So that you must not think my hesitation is owing to any disinclination or dislike. Will you agree to this? Give me but a little time to accustom myself to the idea, to appreciate it as I ought; and I assure you, at the same moment, that I do indeed, I admire your talent, and virtues, and—I can tell you, too—that there is no one else, as, indeed, you may guess, whom I admire, or care for.”

Mr. West's face was growing brighter and younger every moment. “Why these are words I never dared to dream of listening to. I understand it all. I see perfectly what you are thinking of. Any time—weeks, months, years, if you like. It is

only natural. And I shall add one condition, and, if you will let me, insist on it. As this step would, I most firmly believe, be all for your happiness and comfort, so I should wish, for the same view, that you should not consider yourself at all bound, but be free to change when you please. As you say," he added, smiling, "you have only just left Miss Pringle's. You have to see something of the world and its gaieties—even such gaieties as we have here. You must be free. Who knows what may come in your way? No, I am more than satisfied. And if you still think the same in time, why you know it will be the greater glory and happiness for me."

"Whatever you please," she said earnestly. "And I will add a little condition of my own. You know what sort of a place this is—how they talk——"

"Just what I was going to say. Our little compact shall be kept secret and

sacred. Oh, Lucy, to-day seems to be another day from yesterday; the men and women whom I so abused a few minutes ago seem to me not nearly so bad! They may be decayed, but they mean well."

She laughed. That laugh was delightful to him, for he now saw that what had been his fatal *bête noire* and phantom—"Such a sacrifice for duty!" and his sister's ugly speech, "Old enough to be her father!" had no place here *now*.

## CHAPTER XII.

## PARADISE.

MR. DACRES, now at the highest point marked on the scale, "exuberant good humour," had turned to seize on his daughter. "Here's my cricket, Mrs. Beaufort, the last élève Miss Pringle has turned out. Tell Mrs. Beaufort about Miss Pringle, Lulu, love—her terms, and teaching, and all that. I never can keep this sort of thing in my head. My dear child, what *have* you done with West?"

Mr. West went home, smiling to himself, and tripping as lightly over the hard

trottoir, as any of Miss Pringle's young ladies. No wonder. He had swallowed the elixir of life, which is love. Neighbours, knowing his hours, thought he was posting home to dinner. Margaret West thought so too, and received him smiling at his eagerness. She was one of those souls who delight in seeing others ready to "do justice" to what their hands have prepared, and whom, of course, the selfish hungry take very easy.

Already she had repented of her plain speaking the night before. She knew his sensitiveness, and that he would feel it doubly; and like many other good souls, thought how she would make it up to him in the best way known to her, by a special treat which she knew he liked—a fine French fowl. It was already nearly the proper time. He came bounding up the stairs.

She saw something in his face, which no prospect of fowls could have inspired.

Her look of bright and kindly reception changed to one of uneasiness. "Where have you been?" she asked, without much meaning in her question.

"Ah, Margaret," he said, exultingly, "you were wrong. I have come from her, and have told her everything, and—and *I* was right!"

She rose up angrily, and, with the colour rushing to her cheek, "rustled" impatiently over to the window. She understood it all now. Her face darkened.

"Then I tell you this," she said at last, turning to him, "you have done a foolish and an insane thing. With all your sense too! When it comes to a point of inclination or whim, the wise and the foolish seem to be just the same. I tell you, you will live to repent it—to repent it in suffering."

"Not I," he answered; "never. Margaret, think me a fool—a child—what you will, but this remains: I am happier than I have been for ten years. The sun

seems to shine—the world to be alive—and life to be something. If this be folly, how can you blame me? for it is so much pleasanter than wisdom, and she is a dear girl!”

That phrase jarred on her. He later recalled her bitter look.

How could she blame him, she muttered, impatiently. “Such follies—at your age!”

Meanwhile the new family had been established at “Poolyack’s,” in the enjoyment of every luxury. The simple tradesmen of the place—varying a little the principle of their countrymen, the Bourbons—had learnt nothing and forgotten everything, and felicitated each other on the blessing of having such patrons. They had the “air so distinguished,” so “*gentil*,” the genuine air, in short, which, alas! so many of their predecessors had, to so fatal an extent. The furniture-maker was allowed, at his own urgent request, to send up to Paris for mirrors of a more elegant pattern, to suit

Mr. G. Beaufort's exacting taste. The best horses, and, singular omen! the all but new phaeton, built to a Sir Jones's order, a *difficile* gentleman, too, and mysteriously abandoned when that displayer of the Red Hand disappeared, and was never heard of again. Mr. Debrett had never heard of him either. This handsome turn-out was accepted grudgingly by the Beauforts, until something better could be found.

The elegance and even magnificence of their apartments was, justly, the theme of all. Men, in shabby old shooting-coats, stopped each other in the street, to tell of what they had just heard at Fay's shop—a humble artist, who dealt in silver-gilt brooches, with a few watches and chains in his window—that he had received orders to have down from Paris a Breguet watch, with all its chains and decorations, of the very “first force.” No price asked! Every one asked prices at Dieppe.

The small notabilities of the place were

deposed ; every one began to struggle to reach these distinguished strangers, and were never tired of repeating that “there was no mistake about them ;” the uncomplimentary hint being, that some “mistake” was incident to the common lot of Dieppe immigrants. Mr. Blacker, the bringer of these valuable recruits, was exalted proportionably. The people who had been inclined to sneer at his rapturous panegyrics, and laugh at his black swans, were now, and for ever silenced. Captain Filby Blacker had made a hit for once.

The bearing of the gentleman of this Guernsey Beaufort family, who seemed to despise the whole place, excited no resentment. It was merely agreed that Mrs. Beaufort was not up to the standard of the rest ; having a kind of gentle, amiable manner, that was scarcely high-bred.

It was noticed, also, that she could talk but little of the “high” persons met in a former state ; and, being rather overlooked

by her husband and brother-in-law, of whom she seemed to stand in timorous awe, she was justly set down "as being of inferior extraction to him;" he had married some person a little lower in degree, for money, most likely. Yet she had a wonderful sweetness of manner, which drew Lucy to her, and that air of resigned suffering. Lucy had her own theory. She wanted love and sympathy.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AT THE POST.

**W**RITING many letters, and looking out now and again on the Place where the market was going on, Mr. West spent the morning busily and cheerfully. The parti-colours, the flitting to and fro of the figures, the fruit, the fish, the wares, the booths, and baskets, reminded him of the market-scene in an opera which he had long ago seen in Paris.

He smiled as he caught himself admitting such associations with pleasure. Not so long ago he would have called it

“a hungry place—those wretched theatrical market-women.”

He then went out to post his papers. Bright day, “gay little place;” so it seemed to him now. On the road, he passed the little toy library, more a stall than a shop, where the English got books, printed in Paris by the admirable M. Baudry, then the chief pirate of the Continent. Le Duc’s, or “Le Duke,” as he was translated, was a great resort. English were always coming in and going out; English were always poking and rummaging in the dark corners, choosing a book. Poor Le Duke used to complain, piteously, of having often to redeem his volumes in person from the local “Hill of Piety,” which he visited in the regular way of business.

Le Duke had the longest face of all that morning, and was telling Captain Filby, dismally, “Nine months’ subscription, sir, and not a farthing paid. The three young

ladies coming every day, and there are two dozen of my books which I shall never, never, see again!"

"Serve you right, Le Duke," was the captain's consolation. "Don't you know our English yet? Not you. You'll be trusting 'em again and again. Hallo, West, you coming for a story-book! By Jove, we'll all be paying our debts in Dieppe next!"

Another time, Mr. West would have coldly put down this gentleman, whom he always kept at a distance. He knew him thoroughly. Perhaps Mr. Filby knew the bad impression he had produced tolerably well, for most men and women have an instinct in such things. Mr. West answered him good-humouredly that morning. "I want something for my sister," he said, "and must subscribe for her. Her life is dull enough."

"Nothing like family affection. I like to see it. Have you met Blacker's new swells

a flock of black swans, of course? Nothing like 'em *ever* came into the place. Ha! Ha! Mark my words, sir, they'll turn up blanks. Take care of 'em, Le Duke. If anything particularly gentleman-like comes into your shop, be on your guard, my friend; and as for anything uncommonly *lady-like*——”

Mr. West could venture on a jest that morning.

“Why, this is most unselfish of you. I hope he has had no reason to regret trusting Captain Filby?——”

“Is *that* a joke?” the other answered, sourly. “I tell you that Blacker has got these decent people, the Dalrymples, to take up those De Courcys, or whatever their name is. They're giving them a little drum. No use asking if *you're* going. Oh, no! We might as well hope to see one of the nuns out of the convent here.”

“I don't know,” said Mr. West, cheerfully. “I dare say we shall be there.”

Mr. Filby looked after him askance, and told his friends that West was getting quite like a child at school; and, remember, he told 'em, that fellow would give the old girl the slip, one day, and end by marrying "some low *pity-feel* out of a back room."

Mr. West went on gaily to the post. He was thinking to himself, "No one shall ever be able to say I am a fool, or repeat that cant about a school-girl, and—old enough to be her father. It shall all come from *her*. She shall have her own time, and shall work it out for herself. If she were to think she was *bound* in any way, it would be a constraint."

He knew human nature so well, did Mr. West; and when he was at the bar, his friends said no man could lead a witness so well, or follow the human mind in its "ebbs and driftings" over the flats and shallows of motives and self-interest.

He was a solitary walker, and found a great pleasure in lonely wanderings up the

cliffs to the old fort, where the few soldiers kept a mouldy guard. There he had his own world, figures of men and women, curious events, and dreams, still more entertaining to him than real men and women, and their doings. He, too, used to go down to the ships ; but at the season when the world was not there.

He frequented the inner port, where the small English brig ran in, and unloaded, or the Rotterdam barque with the wings folded to its sides ; where the soup-fed custom-house officers, in dingy livery, moved about sadly among casks and chests. But on this day he was looking cheerfully and with interest at the regular inhabitants and colonists. He was thinking what dramatic life there must be among them, what character, what shifts, what knavery, had a man but time and inclination to study them.

Here was the post—a dull, money-lending, pawnbroking little hovel, yet the

most interesting spot in the whole place. Tragedy, comedy, farce, went on there. The little Frenchman who sat at the window, what a study of faces he could have made! The matter-of-fact Englishman, putting forward his card, "See here,—for Wilson, please—anything pour moi, I say?" and who turns away with an almost audible "d—n" of disappointment. The timorous girl, with face full of a wistful pain, and a voice that she tries to keep steady, and who has been sent by mamma and the girls at home for the expected letter, which they know will not come.

Wonderful man at the window—whose life goes by dipping into pigeon-holes, and turning over letters as if they were packs of cards! His patience is marvellous. And what faces outside! The English actually reading in the road, their mouths altering slowly, as they read, from a long slit, to a round O of consternation and despair. The more respectable lost all this excitement.

As he came away, the dingy and gloomy lane became illuminated with a flash of light, and a gay step came tripping along. It was Lucy. She was postman, manager, market-woman, everything. Within the short time she had left school, she had taken a host of duties on her. When she saw West, she ran to him. "Getting letters?" she said. "Papa wants his, though he can expect nothing as yet. And," she added, smiling, "there can be no bad news. Oh, we are all in such spirits at home, and so happy! I left him singing, and reading his newspapers—and he says he feels like a boy."

"This *is* good news," said he, smiling. "But what is the reason of all this?"

"Well, *you* should know," said Lucy, naively. "Our poor Harco says you are 'his back,' and that he does not know where he would be without you. And, do you know, he says after you have been with him, he feels *so* hopeful. Will you promise

me this?" she added, stopping and looking up wistfully into his face—"to be with him as much as you can? Some way, we do not know how to keep him up."

"My dear Miss Lucy, since I saw you I have been thinking of all sorts of things. In a few days, I will tell you what I have worked out. But I am sure we shall light on something for him—something that will clear away all difficulties, if you will only get him to second me a little."

"How good you are!" said she, enthusiastically. "I could take your hand here and kiss it."

"Hush!" he said, colouring, and looking round. "There is nothing in that. If I could only find out some way——"

"But there *is* something," she said, with an affectionate impatience that was her characteristic. "And what kindness! What can I do in return? Ah! let us get on quickly; there is that dreadful man."

Mr. Filby was limping down to get his

newspapers at the post—cursing the stones at every step. Gout used to seize on him at times, and put him in his worst humour. He saw the pair, and that evening, as he sat on a bench at the Port, he told some of his admirers that West was sniggering and sneaking after that little chit of a school-girl, who might be his great-granddaughter, and as knowing a little shaver as any of the crew here. “He has to pay that Irishman, her father, many a nap. for letting her humbug him.”

There were no letters for Mr. Dacres. “I am not sorry,” said Lucy, confidentially, “for it is generally only one in ten, which we call a *good* letter.”

“We shall try and make them all good letters in future,” he said.

“Ah!” she said, stopping. “I was thinking of this ever so long before going to sleep last night—a poor childish creature like me, with what you will call no mind—

and then you so wise, and clever, and experienced, and have seen so much life——”

A look of uneasiness came into his face, and a sort of twitch about his mouth. “Now I hope,” he said, quite calmly, and even indifferently, “you remember what we agreed on; in fact, that there was to be no agreement? That is what I wish for. Only, instead of lying awake and losing that dear and precious sleep, why not think everything over comfortably and leisurely during the next few months or years, if you please. I am, as you say, wiser and older.”

“You never *will* understand me,” she said, vehemently, and half turning away from him. “You turn everything I say. Do you want superiority over a poor young girl just fresh from a school, by forcing her to do homage to your pride by telling you that she likes and worships your gifts? I *can't* tell you any such thing. I won't. I said enough last night, when I told you I

liked you, and *could* like you more, and *would* try to like you more again. If I am not clever, I can be truthful, and not all your power and cleverness of the world can get more from me than that."

With glowing face she turned and tripped hastily away. He smiled, and did not call her back.

"This will do very well, *ca va!*" he was thinking to himself, and went on to take a cheerful and brisk walk up on his favourite beat of the ramparts, where the lonely soldiers heard "the Englishman" singing to himself as he passed them.

When Lucy came home, she found her father lying on the comfortable velvet sofa, reading the newspaper.

"Well, my little Lulu," he cried, "where's papa's budget?" He was a little put out and disappointed. "And what on earth kept you?" he said, getting up. "I told that blackguard at the hotel to send me on everything in a cover. I suppose

they'll keep me waiting, waiting, from day to day, sending and sending, and coming back with our fingers in our mouths. Phew!" And he looked ruefully out of the window, with his hands deep in his pockets! "On my soul, my last lodgings, though they looked out on a yard with rails over it, had more life than this."

Lulu came up to him to coax him into good humour, as if she were Annot Lyle with her harp. "*Why*, I thought you liked a hotel, Harco, pet?"

"Hotel!" and he burst into a loud laugh. "Oh, ay, to be sure. Hôtel de Diable. Little innocent. You should sit up aloft, my sweet little cherub! Well, well—hope deferred, and all that. I don't know how things will turn out. Here's precious time, youth, strength, manhood, passing away. The golden hours when I might be making name and fame, all going from me like a puff!"

"Now, now," said she, getting a pained

expression. "You promised me, you know, Harco. It will be only for a short time, and then——"

"Easy for you to say, 'and then.' What's the difference to you? There are all my jolly fellows going Circuit—they're at Preston by this—and that prig, Colter, with as much brains as would go into my last pill-box, picking up every prisoner and every case that I should have. He'll fill the jails quick enough. God help the poor devils *he* defends! Where is that man—that West, your affianced lover?"

Lucy gave a start, and looked round in alarm. As she did so, she saw on his face signs of the "little glass," "pity-vare," as it was known to the English. It explained the sudden depression. "Oh, papa, you must not say that. You know it is to be secret, and to be kept secret, for all our sakes."

"And *who* says it's to be secret? Do I want arrangements of this sort to be

huggermuggered over, as if there was anything wrong or disgraceful ?”

“ Ah, papa, papa,” she said impetuously, and all but wringing her hands, “ I see, we cannot depend on you. You *won't* understand. You will ruin all. This is not to be known or talked of. It is his wish, too, his earnest wish, that the cruel people about here should not be watching and talking. And I must have time to learn to love him and esteem him, as he deserves to be loved and esteemed. Even this morning, he was laying out plans for you—a grand future—by which you were to get back and win the high position your great talents and genius deserve. But, oh, I do fear you will spoil all.”

“ Was he now ? Well, he's a good fellow. And I was wrong. I spoke indiscreetly. Even in presence of my own child, I see I must learn to speak by the card, and as if the whole town were listening.”

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Having obtained what he desired, Mr. Dacres put on his hat carefully before the glass, brushed the collar of his coat, and went out.

He said this very bitterly, the parental heart was deeply wounded by its child's treatment. "But he is a good man, a good fellow; and, Lulu, the wish of my heart is, before you and poor dear mamma close my eyes, to see you united to the honourable, high-minded, conscientious man who will stand by you, and shield my little girl from harm. I'll just get my hat," added Mr. Dacres, his manner suddenly changing into the gayest alacrity, "and take a turn with him, and talk things over. I like particulars in everything. 'Often' won't do with me. I tell a blackguard of a witness, 'Look up at the jury, sir, and give me the day of the week and particulars—you beggar, you!' Give me a kiss, pet, and run and ask mamma for a little five-franc piece for papa. I think I'll have a quiet little feed at the caffy there, with one of those gentlemanly Beauforts. I declare I'll be running to seed and grow mouldy, if I don't see a bit of life."

Having obtained what he desired, Mr. Dacres put on his hat carefully before the glass, brushed the collar of his coat, and went out.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE DILIGENCE COMES IN.

WE have mentioned Sody's, the post-house—Sody was a wine-merchant also—which was at the bottom of the hill, going out of the town, and where the Paris diligence came in every second day, about four o'clock. A cloud of dust on the hill made Sody, sprinkling sand in a dingy den within, finish as quick as he could; gathered lounging men and boys in the blouse uniform, and even brought faces to many windows. The sound was like that of an orchestra—as the not unmusical jingling,

and the sonorous tramping of six horses, came out of the cloud; and presently the great wain itself—piled like a mountain with men and luggage, swinging and reeling, with the driver swearing and cracking his enormous waggoner's whip, and every horse of the six, leaping and tossing, and plunging, and doing everything but draw like its decent fellows in England—came thundering in, and pulled up with nicety in front of Sody's. It was an ark—a hotel laid on its side on wheels—it seemed to hold so much humanity. These were the old Lafitte days.

Men talk of our great railways; but the “administration” of this service was marvellous. Time was kept; rain, snow, ice notwithstanding—the great wheeled argosy was got on somehow. If forty horses were necessary, forty were found; drivers and conductors were gifted men in their way. The former giants. In the ice-bound days, when the country was like steel, they

would flog their wild horses down the steepest hills, to the music of women's shrieks from within, and to their own frightful swearing. Now a frantic brute would be down, and dragged along by the rest : but scourged to his feet again by that amazing whip. Those in the coupé had the hoofs of the frantic brutes, on a level with their faces. The frightened English ladies would see at the road-corners, pink-nosed, wild, cream-coloured frantic Normandy horses, sent by a nobleman to be put into the diligence, and broken in, by that severe training. Nearly every one went by diligence to Paris. Posting had infinitely more risks, was not so certain, and was less rapid.

Here it was now come in ; here was the mountain of baggage being got down—the “johndarmes,” all boots and white tape, lounging by, and giving place to Mr. Blacker, who was scrutinising the passengers with an official air. They seemed

a poor set enough, he thought; he could see with a glance, from long practice, their quality.

As he was looking on at the confused crowd of helpless strangers—English ladies, with daughters and children, bewildered with the commissaries shouting the names of their establishments, and even dragging them away—a gentlemanly-looking man, all over dust, came up to him, and said :

“ You seem an Englishman, sir ; and I think I saw you at the Port——”

Mr. Blacker drew back a little haughtily at this style of address—“ seem an Englishman, indeed !” He had noticed that the person was very dusty and shabby. No man had such a just contempt for the “shy” English—

“ Possibly, sir,” he answered, “ I have been there ; and pray now what do you want with me ? ”

“ I saw you with Mr. Dacres,” the gentleman went on ; “ perhaps you could help me.

as a stranger, and tell me of some quiet lodgings here. I am really hardly well enough for the bustle of a hotel."

A sick and decayed stranger—the next thing, as Mr. Blacker had a sure and certain instinct, would be an application in harmony with these symptoms. "My good friend, how can I tell you? I really do not know what will suit people. You must go to an agent, or walk about and look up at the houses. It's not in my way at all, I assure you. God bless me, who have we here?"

A post-chaise was clattering down the little hill, with the great speckled Wooverman horses, round as dray-horses, and the picturesque post-boy jogging up and down. There was something to interest Mr. Blacker, and he darted away to play the good Samaritan. A post-chaise and luggage were like an order set in jewels. "There was no mistake" about that; there was nothing on credit here, you

see — you paid as you went. It was a handsome and costly shape of introduction. In an instant the diligence lost interest, and the blouses gathered about the newly arrived chaise.

Mr. Blacker, forgetting the shabby fellow who had come in the diligence, was peering in, his hand shading his eyes, with a half smiling recognition, which his practice of accosting utter strangers had made habitual.

He saw it was a large, full, and pink-faced gentleman in a grey travelling cap, well drawn down, which seemed like a nightcap, and a distinguished air of wealthy portliness. Beside him was a very young girl, blooming, petite, with rosy cheeks, though a little overcome with modesty at the publicity she was exciting. The dusty gentleman stood by with a little curiosity. He had seen Mr. Blacker's eagerness, and was amused.

As the door was opened, the pair seemed not a little nervous at all the faces, strange,

voluble, half-savage, half good-humoured, which were bent on them. Then the chorus broke out. "Go to Roy'l H'tel, my lor'!" "Take you to Wheelers, on the Port, near the ships!" "Take my card, sir; the Roy'l is full!" "Hôtel du Nord!" "Hôtel d'Angleterre!" At these invitations they seemed to be a little terrified. The dusty gentleman still watching, was more amazed at seeing Mr. Blacker elbow his way among them all, calling loftily to the man in white tape, and boots, and huge sabre,

"Here, John Darm! make way, do; it's unbearable; the thing wouldn't be allowed at home. *Do* keep back. Good evening, sir. How do you do? Let me help you. These are merely the ways of the place. This must be put down by government, sir. I am Mr. Blacker, a resident here for many years. If I can be of any use, I shall be delighted. I'm sure——"

"Oh, sir!" said the lady, "how kind of

you! We don't know what to do. There is some mistake about our passport."

"Yes," said the pink gentleman in the travelling-cap, with an air of half terror, half worry, "it has been wrong all the way from Paris, and they have been threatening us. I am an English gentleman—Mr. Wilkinson—on our tour; and we are willing to pay, I am sure."

Mr. Blacker's face fell; he had counted on a lord, at least. Still there was wealth. His face spread out again into an universal and almost devouring smile.

"Oh! that is nothing; leave it to me. You go to a hotel, of course! The Royal I would recommend; but, of course—"

Here the chorus broke in, as that word was caught. A dozen dirty hands, holding dirty cards, were thrust out on both sides of Mr. Blacker.

"Outrageous!" he said, angrily; "*will* you keep back?"

"Oh, thank you," said the lady. "You

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are so kind. We did not know *where* to go."

"Leave it all to me, then," went on Mr. Blacker, with the rapidity and promptness of a general giving orders. "You will go to the Royal. Mention my name, and Le Buff will do his best for you. Here, some one, tell Mr. Sody to come out. Dites à M. Sody d'approcher. Mr. le Chef, there is some errure here about the passport; n'est pas en règle, you see." This was addressed to an officer in a double-horned cap with tassels, who, with a bundle of open papers in his hand, was striding towards them.

The officer bowed a great deal, as M. Blackhaire spoke to him privately, and with great earnestness; for he, too, had the general complimentary impression, that the English were in occupation of his town, and its real rulers. There was no difficulty beyond the usual conventional irregularity, which the police often delighted in dis-

covering and as readily condoned, and they graciously consented that the lady and gentleman might proceed to the Royale, where "Mr. the chief" would wait on them himself in person. Mr. Blacker announced these glad tidings to the strangers, with very much the air of one who had obtained a reprieve.

"I'll see you, myself, in the morning—will call up. I am Mr. Blacker, the secretary to the English Fund here, trustee, and all that, you know, and I dare say could be of much use to you. The authorities are fair enough. Willing to do what they can to oblige me. Here, you, drive this lady and gentleman to the Royal. Good evening;" and in a profusion of grateful acknowledgments the pair were driven away.

Mrs. Blacker at home was surprised at the spirits in which her husband returned. Here, indeed, were the "most charming people" — "quite an acquisition" — the

are so kind. We did not know *where* to go."

"Leave it all to me, then," went on Mr. Blacker, with the rapidity and promptness of a general giving orders. "You will go to the Royal. Mention my name, and Le Buff will do his best for you. Here, some one, tell Mr. Sody to come out. Dites à M. Sody d'approcher. Mr. le Chef, there is some errure here about the passport; n'est pas en règle, you see." This was addressed to an officer in a double-horned cap with tassels, who, with a bundle of open papers in his hand, was striding towards them.

The officer bowed a great deal, as M. Blackhaire spoke to him privately, and with great earnestness; for he, too, had the general complimentary impression, that the English were in occupation of his town, and its real rulers. There was no difficulty beyond the usual conventional irregularity, which the police often delighted in dis-

covering and as readily condoned, and they graciously consented that the lady and gentleman might proceed to the Royale, where "Mr. the chief" would wait on them himself in person. Mr. Blacker announced these glad tidings to the strangers, with very much the air of one who had obtained a reprieve.

"I'll see you, myself, in the morning—will call up. I am Mr. Blacker, the secretary to the English Fund here, trustee, and all that, you know, and I dare say could be of much use to you. The authorities are fair enough. Willing to do what they can to oblige me. Here, you, drive this lady and gentleman to the Royal. Good evening;" and in a profusion of grateful acknowledgments the pair were driven away.

Mrs. Blacker at home was surprised at the spirits in which her husband returned. Here, indeed, were the "most charming people" — "quite an acquisition" — the

“best-bred air”—swans, in short, of a far darker hue than the Beauforts. So in a prolific family the newer and later baby puts the penultimate bantling “out of joint.”

The dusty gentleman had seen the whole proceeding with a smile. It was “such a bit of human nature,” he thought. Mr. Blacker had walked past him, his eyes seeing only airy visions, his mouth smiling at its welkin, and without even dreaming that he had seen him only a few moments before. He himself took his way to the Port.

“I shall have to go to a dreary hotel after all,” he was thinking, “to be elbowed by a cold crowd, to be sitting in public, three-quarters of the day, and served as though I was one of a regiment. I cannot endure it. A servant’s face, even, in one of those rooms, would be something more comforting, and have more the air of home.”

## CHAPTER XV.

## MAISON ROBERT.

A GENTLE face—almost as he spoke—that of a young girl, had come hastily out of “Chang Purdy’s”—thus known to the English—a very stout artist, in a white cap and apron, and a fierce knife always in his hand. He kept a “charcuterie,” and it was owned grudgingly by Captain Filby that his sausages were “uncommon good, though Heaven only knew how many cats the rascal chopped up in ’em.” The young lady, coming out hastily, with a little bag in her hand, almost ran up against the

traveller. She drew back with the conventional cry and start. He apologised; but stopped, and said :

“Why, Miss Lucy Dacres, is it not? You remember, I came over in the Eagle with your papa?”

Lucy, at the very first moment, had recalled the handsome face, the black Spanish eyes, and moustache. These things made the same impression on her as they would on any of her sisters.

“What! Colonel Vivian!” she exclaimed, eagerly. “Ah! so it is!” She put out her hand.

So it had been, the very second she came out of the shop; but who can help this little worldly training?

“You have come back from Paris! Are you going to stay? O! Papa will be so glad!”

There was a cordiality in her greeting that touched him.

“I hardly know what I shall be able to

do. I am so weary, and have gone through so much. I feel as if I were going to have an old illness back on me. But I will fight it off, if it were only," he said, smiling, "to avoid a sick-room at a hotel."

"You do look ill," she said, impetuously; "indeed you are ill. I saw it at once. You are tired and overworked. Shall I go home, and tell papa?"

"It is nothing," he said, leaning wearily against the door of the little shop. "I have gone through much worse, though I thought I should have died in that dreadful coupé. I must only fight it off, as I have often fought it off before. I meant to have gone on to-night, as I could not endure the hotel; and as a capital preparation, I am going on that most weary of all searches, hunting for lodgings—going upstairs here, and meeting strange bargaining faces there. It is a dreadful business, and I shrink from it."

"Oh," said Lulu, eagerly, "we could tell

you of a place—a charming one—close to us. Why, it would exactly suit you! I *know* it would. So quiet too; and they would give the world to have a person like you with them.”

He smiled. “You think I am quiet? Let us go and take them at once. You are quite a house-agent, and I am greatly obliged to you. It comes so welcome, after the behaviour of a pompous Samaritan up at the diligence-office, and who quite put me aside, when I asked him what I asked you.”

“Mr. Blacker, I am sure,” said Lucy, laughing. “Yes it *was*. That is Mr. Blacker all over.”

Striking out of the Place, and turning up one of the streets that led away to the town, they were not long in getting to “Robert’s,” the house with a court—the only one in that quarter—opposite to where Mr. Dacres lodged. On the way was the old church, a yellow, Normandy pile, rough

and jagged, and with a humped effect about its old shoulders, which, when lit up at night, with its tall craggy windows, its bent stained-glass, its grand stone disorder, its luxurious rankness of carved and shaken extravagance, seemed like an old mediæval shrine out of the Hôtel Cluny. For of nights it was often thus lit up, not while official evening service was going on—but some little pastoral rite, to which no one need go, but to which every one that passed by, turned in for a few minutes; it might be the pretty fishing-girls, who were to walk in procession in a few weeks.

Robert's was a neat, comfortable clean place—had been considered even handsome in old days, when one of Louis the Sixteenth's intendants had lived there. The court was a great feature. Down in the Great-street it would have brought three times the rent—an addition that would have been very welcome to the hard-working couple who owned it.

It was kept by a young pair, newly married, who had waited what seemed to them an eternity ; and at last, in despair of any hope of things bettering, had plunged desperately, and, with a little aid from friends, who were watching them (" Miss Lucy Dacres, a napoleon " ), had started this little establishment. Once embarked, they worked frantically, for the liability hanging over them was tremendous ; and people noticed the handsome young boy of a husband, sawing blocks of wood on the little X-shaped frame, all day and night, in a manner that would put to shame any jovial or laborious miller, whether on the Dee or elsewhere. The young wife laboured away within, at washing ; for they strove in a hundred ways to make out the dreadful sum required by a severe landlord ; but their grand dependence were the " apartments," which had let but indifferently during the past season. Lucy deeply concerned for the struggle of these

her protégés, had seen their young and handsome faces growing every day more wistful and contracted, with anxiety and responsibility, and her delight at being able to help them in this house-agency way overcame all diffidence about speaking so intimately to a stranger. She led him in triumph to the house. She found the pair more wistful and anxious still, going over their accounts in a sort of council. She brought joy and hope with her, and almost danced with delight, as she saw their brightening faces. The rooms were pretty, bright, clean, and cheerfully furnished.

She flew over to tell her father, who, she knew, would be overjoyed, and found him in one of his most buoyant moods.

“News! A party, Lulu, my chirrup,” he called out. “A little gaiety for you. The swells are on view to-night, at dear Mother Dalrymple’s; and Blacker is the showman. He can’t keep me in his menagerie, as he does the herd. I never mind him. Go nicely

dressed, pet; your little white simple frock; and we'll be neat as nine-pence. Poor mamma here will mope at home."

Then Lucy told her adventure. "O that handsome man has come back, papa, and is going to stay opposite. Such a face, Harco dear, like the old Spanish cardinal we saw in the Museum! I could study it like a picture. He's worth all the Frenchmen here."

"Witch!" said her father, with his "fond" manner. "Nice training I've given you at Miss Pringle's—bringing off gentlemen with Spanish faces to lodgings opposite, and have 'em convenient for study. Ah, my young lady, if I had you ten minutes in the witness-box——" Then, seeing some disturbance and alarm in her face at this matter-of-fact picture of what she had done, he added: "Don't mind, Lulu love; it's only the way I'd leave it to the jury, supposing they ever put me on a bench—that is, supposing the sky to

come down upon us, one day. Though God help us before a jury of this place—virgins or matrons. I tell you what, I'll just run over and see our friend. It's only polite, you know—a poor stranger in the place, without a friend. And I tell you what, too, we'll bring him off with us to the divarshion to-night, and my Lulu can study his fine Spanish face to her heart's content."

"No, no," said she, gravely, "we must not disturb him, Harco dear. He wants to be quiet, and looks very ill."

"Only the yellow Spanish tone, my dear," said he, in high good humour. "You took it for jaundice. I'll bring him, canvas, frame, and all. Who knows, pet, but we may have him hanging up in your room before long, ha! ha!—by a red cord, ha! ha!"

This shape of jest began to trouble Lucy a good deal. When her father was in spirits, and he had got hold of what he thought was a "good thing to work," she knew there was no restraint. As he said,

he could make the punch boil with anything that came handy, even with what might affect his darling Lu's most tender sensibilities.

"Now, you must promise me," she said, gravely, and as though she were lecturing a younger brother, "not to be saying that sort of thing before strangers. You know, dear, the set of people that are here, and how unkindly and unscrupulously they speak."

He became grave. "What was I called to the bar for? Tell me that, Miss. What do the attorneys come to me for? Is there a man among all those rascals in the "stuff"—and there isn't a better-hearted lot in the world than our circuit—is there one of 'em, I say, can take a case lightly and gingerly over a hole just covered with a few rotten sticks—and a little grass, maybe?—

"With she by my side,  
My beyewtiful bride,  
Through nature we'll ride.

“Ah! Dacres is the coachee they want for nice tender driving like *that*—eh?” And he seemed to wait a reply to this “poser,” which, had it been addressed privately to that large-hearted circuit where he was so popular, would have been answered in a fashion directly opposite to what he anticipated; for in delicate parts of a case it was notorious his rough indiscreet driving was sure to send everything through.

In such a humour remonstrance was useless, and Lucy saw him gaily cross the street—a boy carolling pleasantly—to invade the premises opposite. Lucy saw, with a feeling of alarm, many such crossings.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE PARTY.

ON the first floor of the milliner's shop—"Ong ho," at Mrs. Dalrymple's—there was some agitation. A few friends were coming that night. Here was one of those little parties which people, apologising for the place, said was the real charm of Dieppe. There was no fuss, no constraint, no elaborate preparation; you were glad to see your friends—so different from the way at home. Suppers, balls, music, splendid dresses, lights—the grand apparatus of festivity—were absent; and their absence

was made a positive merit of. Who shall blame this ingenious shift? It was impressed over and over again on the wealthy, who, alas! could stay but a day or so.

The little rooms were cleared away. The good lady, the hostess, enjoying in that strange place the respect which decency and conscience, and fair conduct extort from those who have long bid adieu to these virtues, was busy with her preparations, which, as she had not left behind in her native land a good warm hospitality, were liberal. Many called this foolish while they enjoyed it. Below there was kept carefully apart, to be brought in at the proper time, browned delicacies, fowls, galantines, with other things of the same substantial family, prepared under personal superintendence, each the best of its kind, and chosen with skill. Blessings on such kindly purveyors! They usher in their little restoratives towards midnight with a pleasant surprise, which we welcome more than the osten-

tatious dainties served at the more official splendours of a ball.

At the last moment, just as they were lighting the candles, the little milliners below all assisting with delight, here was Mr. Blacker's heavy step heard on the stair—his panting figure stalking up, and actually making the good lady of the house nearly drop one of her wax-lights.

“My dear madam, see here! Such a thing has turned up, and I haven't lost a moment coming off to you. The nicest pair! Just come! I sent 'em to the Royal at once. The *best* people, and no mistake at all! She of the highest, tip-top connexion. Where are the girls, with the pen and ink? Just fill in something nice—‘request the pleasure,’ and all that.”

There was a pleased agitation invading the happy hostess, a flurry not at all undelightful. The girls clustered from all quarters and crowded about her.

“Dear, dear,” said their mamma, smil-

ing, "where *shall* we put them all? But what is the name, Mr. Blacker?"

"Wilkinson — Mr. Wilkinson and his wife," said the girls.

"Now fold it up," said Mr. Blacker. "I'll take it myself; in fact, I told them I would show them a little of our quiet society. I saw they liked it. Oh, first-rate people—maid and man in the rumble, and all that. See here; Mrs. Dalrymple—'this confidentially'—I'll bring them about half-past eight; not earlier, you know. They are accustomed to the London ways. 'Pon my word, very nice," he added, looking round; "very nice, indeed!"

Before eight o'clock that night there was near a dozen people assembled in these little rooms, which looked cozy and inviting enough, though Captain Filby (present in a pink under-waistcoat) was very pleasant about a "bandbox," and having a ceiling pressing on your head. He was growling to young Dempsey in the corner: "Why

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didn't she hire a garson or two, from the hotel—the beggars would have been glad of a franc at this slack time—to roar our names up the stairs? Wait till next month, and, mark my words, if this good woman isn't going round to Sody and the rest of them: 'My dear Mussier Sody, I am so sorry, but next week or so I expect a remittance;' and all that. You see it's Sody, and the other rascals who *really* pay for all this—these wax-lights and all."

There also was M. Pigou, the handsome pastor—already retired into a corner, as into an arbour, with the handsome daughter of the house, his dark eyes "reading hers," as he thought, with an exquisitely hopeless sense of being misunderstood and unintelligible to the whole world. Here was Doctor White, the gay unmarried doctor; but not Doctor Macan. We can hear Mrs. Dalrymple explaining this with nervous anxiety, as though she were a diplomatist.

"You know, Doctor White is our friend,

and was recommended to us, and is as agreeable a young man as ever I met. I asked Mr. Macan, but he wrote me back such a stiff, angry letter, saying he wouldn't go into the same room with Mr. White, and that I must have known that. Really, I am not accustomed to be lectured in that way about my poor little parties. I shall never trouble him again. But not a word to Mr. White; it would only spoil his pleasure for to-night."

The gentleman alluded to was, of course, in full possession of the whole transaction, and was "winning golden opinions" by the easy and pleasant way he took it—a nice, pleasant, good-tempered young fellow, and desirous to succeed. No wonder! for he spoke in the magnanimous way of Doctor Macan. No man more admired his abilities than he did. He thought it a little unfair and ungenerous in one of Dr. Macan's standing to try and keep back one in the profession. So far it had not

succeeded. The young ladies said Mr. White—it was agreed tacitly that he should not be called “Doctor”—was *so* good-looking.

This little episode was most valuable, and, later, furnished the colony with interesting whispers and speculations for several days. But in a moment this little scandal was absorbed in the grander interest of the arrival of the distinguished guests, Mr. Blacker coming on before and plunging into the room, looking eagerly round, and seizing Mrs. Dalrymple by the wrist, to drag her off to meet this grand stranger. It was quite a procession ; Guernsey Beaufort, a London club man, superbly gracious, laying himself out, as it were, you see, to suit himself to this sort of thing. Indeed, he had a good-naturedly amused look as he turned his eyes up to the low ceiling.

Mrs. Beaufort was gentle and even sorrowful, all her finery helplessly betraying her inferior origin, and that she had been

married for money. The younger Beaufort's scornful contempt for the people and the place—constitutional and involuntary—his unconcealed weariness, his openly careless explanation that "Guernsey insisted on bringing him," — that he was counting the minutes till he got back to town, were tokens there were no mistaking; a gulf was all around him, separating him from the canaille, and he was on a rock in the middle.

Our Lucy had come early by herself; that is, attended through the Dieppe streets by the little maid who waited on her. That was almost a not unpicturesque and even theatrical sight—the lights twinkling in the shops over wares that seemed like gold and silver, and the lamp swinging overhead from lines. At times, when the night was wild, the sullen drone of the sea close by, came round the corners. Her father was to drop in later. She was a little excited; it was her first amusement of the kind since

she had been manumitted. She looked so pretty and attractive. Young Mr. White grew distrait talking to the Miss Dalrymples, as he looked over to her. It was known that he admired her. Other eyes, bent on her from a retired corner, were watching her with less complacency.

For a time, Lucy, pleased with the lights—and your true entrepreneurs of these little private shows know that light can supply furniture, glitter, magnificence, everything, if it be but turned on in abundance—she was charmed with the festive dresses and the “company manners,” all new to her. Thus engrossed, it was some minutes before she saw Miss West’s staid face bent on hers, watching grimly and fixedly from a corner. Lucy darted over to her.

“I am so glad we meet here. Is it not pretty and charming? And I feel as if I was going to enjoy myself. And where is my dear Mr. West? He’s coming later?”

"No; he is not coming. He had business at home."

"Not coming?" cried Lucy; "how strange of him! He always goes out with you, does he not?"

"I can see you are here by yourself," said the other, coldly; "but *I* don't think it odd of you. My brother has letters to write."

"Nonsense," said Lucy, gaily; "tell him, from me, I don't believe in his excuses. His letters would keep well enough till morning, if he would put his thoughts in water, like flowers."

"I should not venture to give him any message of that sort," said Miss West, with greater coldness, "though I *am* his sister. I should not dare to look for any reasons other than such as he chooses to give me."

Lucy replied, in a sort of speculative way, her eyes seeming to work out the conclusion:

"Then I shall tell him, for I am privi-

leged to say what I please to him. This is some little plan or policy. I am sure he is working some scheme. He is so clever, you know; and when he does anything out of the usual course, depend on it, he has some end in view."

"I shall tell him all these compliments, you may be sure," said Miss West, looking straight at her.

"But I am *asking* you to tell him," said Lucy, gravely, and wondering how odd and "dry" some people could be, in this very pleasant world.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SPLENDID COLONEL.

MRS. DALRYMPLE now came up with her friendly manner. " I am so glad you have come, for the girls said we were sure not to have you, as Mr. West did not come, and as you never went anywhere without him. I could tell you the funny reasons that wicked Captain Filby has been giving for it."

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Blacker came plunging and striding at Mrs. Dalrymple, grasped her wrist, and dragged her to the door, with an agitated "Here they are! Come along quick."

Such a surprise for the company—even extorting an impatient "Who the deuce have we here now?—is Blacker losing the half-pint of wits he had," from Captain Filby. The tall, pink-faced, "pluffy" squire, with that country-looking girl on his arm, now entered. Guernsey Beaufort's brother put up his glass, and seemed interested. She had a delighted smile of half pleasure, half confusion. People were not trained well enough at Dieppe to go on talking; but every one stopped in a death-like silence, and stared, and gaped.

Only Mr. Blacker was heard in agitated spasms: "Mrs. Dalrymple, let me—Mr. Wilkinson — Mrs. Wilkinson. I knew, Mrs. Dalrymple, I might venture to ask for a card for our friends."

"I am too delighted," the hos'

"I hope you are not fatigued. Here, dear, get Mrs. Wilkinson a seat."

Then followed great disturbance, and rustling and unsettling, and the pretty bride, for such she was, overwhelmed with confusion, was duly seated. Mr. Blacker "lashed himself" (Captain Filby's remark) firmly alongside the pink squire and pretty stranger, and took care, very minutely and unnecessarily, to give full details of their meeting, that all the room should learn his title to the possession and manipulation of the strangers. They were his, by the laws incidental to Dieppe jetsam and flotsam. That title was always honourably acknowledged in the colony. "And Lady Mary Wilkinson," added Mr. Blacker, very loud indeed "I hope we may soon be ordering rooms for her."

A greater bustle still when Mrs. Dalrymple, with pride, led forward Guernsey Beaufort's brother, who had asked to be made known to Mrs. Wilkinson. He at

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"I am too delighted," the hostess replied.

“I hope you are not fatigued. Here, dear, get Mrs. Wilkinson a seat.”

Then followed great disturbance, and rustling and unsettling, and the pretty bride, for such she was, overwhelmed with confusion, was duly seated. Mr. Blacker “lashed himself” (Captain Filby’s remark) firmly alongside the pink squire and pretty stranger, and took care, very minutely and unnecessarily, to give full details of their meeting, that all the room should learn his title to the possession and manipulation of the strangers. They were his, by the laws incidental to Dieppe jetsam and flotsam. That title was always honourably acknowledged in the colony. “And Lady Mary Wilkinson,” added Mr. Blacker, very loud indeed “I hope we may soon be ordering rooms for her.”

A greater bustle still when Mrs. Dalrymple, with pride, lead forward Guernsey Beaufort’s brother, who had asked to be made known to Mrs. Wilkinson. He at

once drops into a seat beside her, takes possession of her, is observed to make her smile and giggle even, with grave observations delivered in a mysterious way, looking at her askance as he spoke. It was soon remarked that Mrs. Wilkinson had "made quite a conquest, my dear," of Mr. Guernsey Beaufort's brother.

A cheerful voice on the stairs, and Lucy interrupts herself, talking in great spirits to the pastor, who approves of her, and has been telling her that there are at most but *two* people in the world who understand him, or ever will understand him :

"Ah ! here's dear old Harco at last."

Yes ! here he was, talking and laughing up the stairs, and actually leading in by the arm a handsome stranger—the Spanish face—and revealing to the terrified Mr. Blacker, who gave something like a groan of agony, the dusty gentleman who had mistaken him for a Samaritan, up at Sody's. He was now resplendent, fresh, clean, delicate-looking

perhaps, attracting all eyes. Beside him, even the glitter of Guernsey Beaufort's brother seemed to fade out. Tailoring is to be had cheaply enough, in one sense, by all indiscriminately; but the true air, the carriage, is not to be thus bought. Mr. Blacker's penultimately distinguished strangers seemed to fall back. Mr. Dacres, as much at home as if he were at the circuit mess, did all the introduction.

"I've brought a friend, Mrs. D. We were dining together, so I thought I might. He and I are old friends—of certainly a fortnight's standing. Ha! ha! Met twice, once in the packet—ah! There's my Lulu's face, hiding like a rose among the bushes. Our little Samaritan, eh, Colonel Vivian? You and I know about that."

Lucy had gone forward to meet him. "A charming Samaritan!" he said, smiling; "not a Levite who would not stop for anybody—except a post-chaise."

“Oh, oh!” said Mr. Dacres, full of suppressed enjoyment. “He is here. You must let me introduce you. Mr. Blacker—Colonel Vivian.”

Mr. Blacker, dreadfully taken aback, could only murmur, “Really, so sorry; quite a mistake, Colonel Vivian. Looking out for some friends I expected; came up at the same moment, you see.”

“Friends! Surely not,” said the Colonel, good-humouredly; “not the people in the post-chaise? I envied them so much, as they seemed quite strangers, and you volunteered your services. It was rather hard on me, who asked you first.”

“Do see here, Colonel Vivian,” Mr. Blacker said, tapping him confidentially, as if to draw him aside into a corner, where he would be told something to his advantage. “I am really so sorry about this little mistake. But I will take you to-morrow, to a charming little bijou of a

place—a pet corner that I have kept specially—for you.”

“For me? No, thanks. I am provided for most delightfully close to Mr. Dacres here—Hôtel Robert.”

Mr. Blacker knew the place. This was a fresh blow. People standing about knew in an instant that something was going on to the disadvantage of Mr. Blacker, though they were ignorant of details; and he seemed to fall that night, like the funds in a panic.

“So you are better?” said Lucy. “Oh, you are looking so much better. And I am sure you like that dear little pair. You will find them willing.”

“That is everything,” said he, “in everybody. *You* are willing?”

“Dull, perhaps, but willing,” said she. “But you don’t look ill,” she added. “I don’t think you were very bad; or have they cured you?”

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“At this moment,” he said, “I am literally in agony. If I was in an open field, with no one near, I should like to give a good shriek.”

“But that would do you no good,” said Lucy, gravely. “It would be better, would it not, to have gone to bed, or have sent for Doctor Macan?”

“All the Doctor Macans in the world could do me little good. If he can cure India and Jamaica, and the remains of swamp fever fluttering about one’s head like bats at night! But I am past the time when I should want to be interesting. Seriously, I am glad to be where I am, to know there is a friendly face in the window over the way. I know nothing about friendly faces, nor never shall. Just come to one side, Miss Lucy—that is your charming name—to this wall. Every one seems to be staring so, and listening, I believe. That’s better. No, I know nothing about friendly faces.”

“But,” said Lucy, warmly, “this is all very wrong, and all your own fault, if you won’t be angry with me for telling you so. Papa says all can do that for themselves. He says,” she added, smiling, “you have only to sow friends, and they will come up like a turnip crop about you.”

“I tried all that over and over again. I might sow broadcast, but nothing came up for *me*. I gave the world a good and a fair chance. It never gave me one: but I don’t complain.”

“Friends are made so easily,” said Lucy. “Oh, you don’t know how easily. Some have been made in a minute—at first sight—as—as——”

She stopped, tried to look grave, then smiled.

“—As our friendship, I hope, will be,” he said, gravely; “unhappily, I must come this road very often, and I shall keep on my pretty little rooms always.”

“It was not *that*,” said Lucy, impetuously. “Only we should be so sorry, and papa likes you.”

“Does he?” said the other, smiling.

“But,” she went on, “why should you be on this road always, like the Jew? No one is obliged to travel backwards and forwards between Paris and Dieppe.” He bowed.

“That is my destiny all the same. I am sorry I cannot tell you the story. If you knew it, you would say I was right in keeping it locked up in my own dark jail. I have no pleasure in making others sympathise, and it will all end one day. Come, what are they about now—cards?”

Little tables, baize-covered, were being drawn out, and candles arranged.

“Cards!” Mr. Ernest Beaufort was heard to say to the lady he had never deserted during the whole evening; “Good Heavens! are we in a country town?”

Mr. Guernsey was more tolerant. It was

he, indeed, that had proposed a snug game.

“Whist!” said Mr. Beaufort; “they should send a bellman round, and collect all the old maids of the town!”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## LUCY'S NEW FRIEND.

THE hostess and her daughters did not relish this serious interruption to their little festivity. It brought silence; but as it was impetuously supported by Mr. Blacker in hoarse stage-whispers—he himself dragging out tables, offering to send home for cards—there was no opposing it. Mr. Beaufort—who had taken very kindly to the clergyman, and said, loud enough to be overheard, that he was charmed with his easy manners, and that any one could tell

*he* had been in the best set—declared that he must have Mr. Wilkinson in his game.

Lucy had been looking on quite downcast at the turn things had taken.

“Oh, I am so sorry,” she said. “We are going to be moped, now. The party is over, and you may wish us all good-night, Colonel Vivian. Oh, if they had only made a round game! A round game is heaven!”

“And why not a round game?” he said. He never was tired of watching the natural play of expression in her face. “It is not so difficult to get up a round game as to get to heaven.”

To her surprise, he went forward, and said, loud enough to be heard by the room (the distinguished, the *really* distinguished stranger was speaking):

“This will be all very dull for the young ladies; they will not be let to talk or gossip. Some one has proposed a round game; it will be merrier, and take every one in, and far better.”

A handsome stranger, looking round for the support of the ladies, was not likely to be left alone.

“Oh, yes!” cried Lucy, “a round game!”

“Now just listen to my Lulu!” said Mr. Dacres, to whom the proposal was a welcome relief, for he was already thinking of “taxing my friend Vivian’s generous heart.”

The adhesion to the proposal was unanimous. Mr. Wilkinson, a timid man, nervous at his responsibilities—he was to have played with Mr. Ernest as partner, and Mr. Guernsey Beaufort against him—the thing was put aside at once. Mr. Blacker was as impetuous against, as he had been for it.

“Dear, good lady, can’t you *see* they don’t want it?” he whispered.

The Beauforts, looking darkly at the author of their defeat, had thus to give up their pleasant evening’s amusement.

The round game then set in. It was the one with the ungracious name—the old rude libel on the gentle sisterhood who prefer to be single. It was then new, and played uproariously. Mr. Ernest alone declined to join, and sat apart with the lady he distinguished. His remarks, during breaks of silence, were borne to the players.

“We are going back to our school-days again. We might as well be in the curate’s house on a holiday night. We ought to have blind man’s buff next.”

Some one was dealing, and there was a silence; when Mr. Vivian’s voice was heard:

“The pleasantest sight I ever saw was a game of blind man’s buff, which we had one Christmas at Lord Langley’s, the Governor-General of India. He played himself, and his wife, the commander-in-chief, and a young duke who was travelling. If we do clear away the tables by-and-by, we have some precedent for it.”

This was an answer to Mr. Beaufort's remark, and yet it seemed merely accidental.

The game was done.

Now Mrs. Dalrymple comes with a confidential request to Mr. Dacres. He would do anything for her, she knew, and, with all these nice people here, they were dying to hear Mr. Dacres sing "one of his charming songs." And laying her hand on his arm, Mrs. Dalrymple whispers very confidentially, "And I want these nice people to hear what capital music we can have in Dieppe. Now, just do go over to the piano."

"My dear ma'am, what can I do?" says Harco, looking up in great good humour. "My little modest *Pipe*, you know."

"No excuse, now. Mr. Guernsey Beaufort is quite a judge, and so curious to hear you; and he has heard all the best, he says—Pasta and Rubini."

"Encouraging, ma'am, certainly," said

Harco, laughing. "Never mind—what shall we call it? What would the young ladies like? 'The Light of her Eyes' I suppose?"

"Charming," said Mrs. Dalrymple, and went round whispering that Mr. Dacres was going to sing—quite a compliment, you know.

Harco's pianoforte accomplishments were slender—what he called "just a chord or two, you know." In fact he *had* just two chords, and went from one to the other just as the kettle drummer fluctuates between *his* two instruments; only that artist is more directed by fixed laws. Harco went gaily over to the instrument, and struck at once into "The Light of her Eyes."

This was his "cheval de bataille;" in the dear old circuit days it was a treat to hear him after dinner. In those times songs of this amatory turn were quite of the high *mode*, the late Mr. Moore having given the tone. The piano, too, was not such

a universal instrument, and at supper parties, ladies and gentlemen would sometimes be called on for a song, which it was only correct to respond to, the lady or gentleman sitting in their place, and singing with their eyes on their plate. As "The Light of her Eyes" was a deserved favourite, and Harco very often heard trolling it, as he went along the streets, it may as well be given in this place, *textuellement*, as M. Pigou would have said.

### THE LIGHT OF HER EYES.

#### 1.

'Tis not for her cheek,  
So rich and so cozy ;  
'Tis not for her mouth,  
So pouting and rosy ;  
'Tis not for the treasures  
That Cupid might sip ;  
'Tis not for the blushes  
Dyeing her lip.

No ! no !

Go ! go !

But the Light of her Eyes,  
It mirrors the skies,  
And she's the best, brightest  
Girl of them all !

## 2.

'Tis not for her hair,  
Flowing in tresses ;  
'Tis not for her brow,  
Inviting to kisses !  
'Tis not for her step—  
A goddess in art ;  
'Tis not for her form,  
Which I'd clasp to my heart.

No ! no !

Go ! go !

But the Light of her Eye,  
Which mirrors the sky,  
And she's the best, brightest  
Girl of them all.

The rapture—the passion—the love-lorn sorrow, with which Harco delivered this effusion, was what gave the song half its effect. Love and wine would seem at the moment, to have been the only divinations he worshipped. People saw a feeling in Harco's eyes as he thus seemed to chaunt

the praise of Venus and the little loves. Mrs. Dalrymple was delighted, and thanked him warmly. Mr. Beaufort said "it was really a fine voice," though Captain Filby said "he wanted to split the ceiling." Lucy listened with pride and delight; she thought "The Light of her Eyes" the finest song, and the most finely sung, of any in the world.

There was a pleasant clinking outside. The hospitable lady was busy, moving in and out. Presently entered trays, jingling musically. The fragrance of the browned French fowls was borne on the air. Captain Filby was softened, and abated his eternal growl, to say that this was the only sensible thing he had seen since he came into the place.

Blessings, we may say again, on those honest purveyoresses whose delight is to set down something good and appetising.

In a minute they were all sitting round with alacrity.

"Mr. Vivian! not going away?" the hostess said, in alarm. "You'll quite offend me."

"A thousand thanks," he answered, "for the most cheerful evening I have spent for years."

"What! must you go away?" said Lucy, her face showing her disappointment—that face which expressed all she felt without restraint—"after your engaging to stay?"

"You are afraid about your protégés," he said, smiling. "They shall not suffer. But I am like the Jew; I may not stay long in one place. It will be the better. But this is not in my way. Indeed, I have no business to be here."

"Miss Lucy; what do you say to this?—Colonel Vivian leaving us just as we are only beginning!"

"I will not allow it," said she. "Don't go away yet, Colonel Vivian. I found you a lodging to-day—a good Samaritan you

called me—and now you must let me find you food, meat, and wine.”

“I am quite helpless,” he said, irresolutely but sat down next to Lulu.

Then that pleasant little meal commenced. The browned French fowls vanished utterly, as though they had taken wings and flown away. Our colonists had not fared so substantially for long. (Was this the secret of the respect “the Widow Dalrymple” enjoyed?) Captain Filby said it was like old England again — “the dear old country we all love so much, but somehow won’t live in.” The Beaufort gentlemen were discontented.

“A cabin in England,” said Mr. Ernest, “before a palace in this wretched hole.”

Colonel Vivian was again looking at him with hostility.

“The French are a very fair sort of people, in their way,” said Mr. Blacker, patronisingly, “but, of course, as compared with our English——”

"I should never think of comparing them, even," said Mr. Beaufort.

"We ought to revive the old vulgar theory," said Vivian, in perfect good humour, "and lay down, once for all, that one Englishman is equal to a dozen Frenchmen."

"Well, so he is," said the other, getting red, "any day! He'd thrash a dozen of them at a time—a set of dirty, swindling fellows. One of our Guardsmen would eat a dozen of them for breakfast."

Vivian laughed with real heartiness. "You won't be angry," he said, trying to be grave, "but really I have read and heard that there were people who held this view, but I always thought it was a joke. Now I can say I have really seen and heard a person say it. I am quite glad. It is something to have come here for."

This was said with such perfect sincerity and satisfaction, that the ladies tittered, and Lucy involuntarily clapped her hands,

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and cried out : "Oh ! how very good ! how funny !" And such is the force of genuine earnestness and true seriousness, on the stage or off, that every one looked eagerly at Mr. Beaufort, as if he were a real curiosity.

The gentleman coloured.

"I don't see your joke," he said. "I don't follow it at all."

Every one the next day was telling "a good thing" that happened last night, and the fun they had, and how the handsome English colonel—whom that artful, quiet girl, Lucy Dacres, had got hold of ("I heard her say, do you know, she was his good Samaritan")—had thoroughly shut up that stuck-up young swell, Beaufort.

Lucy often thought of that night later—"her first party." It seemed such a pleasant scene. She was delighted with her new friend. There was something in his voice—a strange interest. He was different from the hard, selfish, pushing crowd about her.

His manner to her was charming. She was a school-girl ; she had not learned the regimental drill of her senses. And some ladies, with an amused air, pointed out to each other the open delight with which she listened and looked at her sad and handsome Englishman.

A stiff, cold face had noted carefully everything of this behaviour the whole night, The owner of it grew more stiff, grim, and unsocial every moment. The "remarking" people always said she was the greatest oddity in the place. And on to-night she would neither play at cards nor eat nor drink ; which unsocial vice offended the good hostess in her nicest point. She still kept in her corner. Lucy was quite unconscious of this observation, and came over now and again to her with that friendly confidential manner which attracted so many friends to her. She was received in the same cold and hostile way ; making her wonder :

"How shall I ever learn to like her? But I must try. I am afraid she dislikes me."

It was at last time to go. The party broke up. Lucy, not a little excited by the night, and with eyes dancing in her head, was a little chilled by the stiff face which she again saw close to her, and the hostile eyes. "How she must dislike me!" she thought. "So different from every one else here." Still she went over to her once more.

"Good-night, dear Miss West," she said; "and tell Mr. West, from me, I shall come to-morrow and scold him for shutting himself up."

"Well, I am glad he was *not* here," was the answer; "though I wished him to come."

The French window gave a noisy clatter, for the wind had been rising during the night. Lucy heard it suddenly sweep down the street, and accepted this as Miss West's

reason. But there was a musical voice at her ear.

“Your papa is going now,” he said. “As you have done so much for me, I am going to ask to be allowed to go with you. I am a helpless stranger here.”

“Of course,” Lucy said, in her eager way; “we brought you, and we take you away, and you know, your new house is opposite ours.”

Miss West heard all this, though she was looking another way, took an abrupt good-night of her hostess, and departed.

“She seemed offended,” the lady of the house said, talking over the party with delight to her girls. “Such odd, blunt manners! I’ll never have her here again without her brother. Do you know, Mr. Beaufort asked was she a governess?”

Pleasant walk home for the trio, though the French wind had risen, and was sweeping very boisterously round the corners. At that little port they were often reminded

of their tremendous neighbour, the sea, lying behind the cliffs rolled up in his mantle, always sulky, and too often bursting out into fearful and savage paroxysms.

Their home was but half a street off. There was but one or two hack vehicles in the whole place.

"This is what I like," said Mr. Dacres, gaily. "It makes me feel like a five-year-old. Oh, it's nice, this, when people see each other. Only it seems absurd breaking up in this way. Why, the night's young yet; and our boys on circuit would be just settling snugly into their chairs, and sending the word down to Harcourt Dacres to give 'em 'The light of her eyes,' or 'As a beam.' You liked that, Colonel?"

"Most spirited. I've had a pleasant evening, and am all the better for it; and I must thank Miss Lucy for it. I shall think of it often when I am the Wandering Jew again. Good-night."

When he was gone, Mr. Dacres looked after him with great interest.

"As nice and gentlemanly a fellow as ever I met with, on or off circuit. I will say *that* for him. There's the true touch in his bearing and demeanour, Lulu love. You like him, Lu, love. I don't wonder you do."

"Oh, I do, papa; that is, I feel for him; for he says he has some trouble hanging over him that may haunt him all his life, and that he has no friendly faces, or people to be kind to him. I so pity these poor lonely creatures that go knocking about the world with a weight of sorrow."

"I have a silent s'row here," said her father, half chanting at the moon. "Just like the poor woman in the play. Well, pet, but what do you mean to do with him?"

"I have a little plan, Harco dear. You must be as kind and attentive to him as you can, and drive these sad thoughts out of his head. He says he must go and travel, but we must not let him yet."

"Ah, rogue, rogue!" said her father, laughing. "What a head it has! Oh, the girls, the girls! Yes. Try and keep him here. I dare say you'd do more than papa, in your little way. You'll soothe him, never fear."

"Oh, he's charming, Harco; and the way he put down that vulgar man! I admired him so for it. I have been laying out such plans about him, which we must talk over. He was quite depressed when he came, Harco dear. I thought he would have fallen in the street up there at the diligence. And you see how cheerful he has gone home. Didn't he, papa?"

"Like a bridegroom off to his wedding," said her father, absently. "That was *your* doing, Lulu."

"Well," said Lucy, doubtfully, "do you know, I was thinking it *might* be. It's hardly vanity to say so. In fact, he told me nearly as much. Oh, Harco dear, I should feel such a pride if I could do a

little good in that way, and turn people from being miserable into being happy. It makes me wretched to see people wasting their precious lives pining away, wasting in despair, when they might be enjoying everything in this dear charming world. It is like converting the unbelievers, dear, isn't it?"

"To be sure it is, Lulu. But," added he, gravely (she didn't see his sly look), "we have another great conversion on hand, love. We mustn't forget *that*."

"Oh dear no," said she, gravely; "but Mr. West and I understand each other perfectly."

"What! that job's done too, eh, Lulu? Well! good-night, love. Oh, these girls!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

## WARNINGS.

LUCY slept sweetly, had charming dreams, and rose very happy. The opinion universally entertained of her next morning was that she was a knowing young thing, and had not been trained in an Anglo-French school for nothing. Her tactics were perfectly known. Now, was it not a painful thing to see a girl of that age brought up so, by that rap of an Irish father, who was teaching her to keep two lovers, both old enough to be her father, in play at the same time? The dark looks

of the dragon of a sister had not been unnoticed, and the stupid child had better have chosen another time to play off her tricks.

But what was this to the feeling when it got known *that she had gone to meet this very officer, at Sody's*, had brought him off, and fixed him happily at lodgings exactly opposite their own house ! This effrontery, and cold strategy, seemed shocking in a child of her years ; and female moralists, over their morning café au lait, might be excused auguring the worst. Indeed, it must be said her behaviour had an air of fitfulness and coquetry ; but then who does not know that perfect innocence and *real* simplicity will do things of the most awkward kind ? The truth was, she had taken her explanation with Mr. West literally. Their explanation had made everything clear to her. In time—years to a young girl—she was to learn how to admire and love him. And he enjoyed such an ex-

emption from the follies and passions of the young, was so moderate, and had such an interest for what was her interest, that—in short, the understanding between them was complete and clear. In the interval she did not understand that she was to lock up her sympathies in the good and amiable.

It was a wild lead-coloured day. It had been a stormy night, and the wind had not gone down. The sea-wind was very unwelcome at the colony, and at every corner lay in wait, cold, searching, and betraying the nearness of the monster from whose bosom it came. The colonists kept close on these visitations. From being a bright, sparkling place glittering like a pinchbeck article de Paris in Blum's window, the little town changed like a chameleon, becoming dull and slate-colour, shrinking, shivering, wrapping itself close in its sad-coloured paletôt. Lucy was looking out from her window a little disconsolately (for this dusky day had a corresponding effect on her father's

temper, bringing the whole train of gloomy forebodings, depression, ill-humour, and the very worst visions of ruin and despair), when a visitor was announced.

Miss West stood before her. That lady's appearance made Lucy wonder, she always regarding her with a curious feeling of awe and repulsion. The day, too, was not one of her days. To her surprise, she came up to her with affectionate haste, and an air of interest that seemed like a sunbeam playing on a bit of ice.

She sat down beside Lucy, asked about her father; had she been down to the port? with the usual conventional questions, but said nothing of the last night.

"Gilbert has not been here? Well, I suppose he will be, later. He has a deep interest in you—deeper, perhaps, than you can suspect, or perhaps understand."

Lucy answered, gravely: "I value and esteem his goodness and kindness to me. And I don't know how—I may be too young

to have the power of saying this as strongly as I ought."

"It is not that," said Miss West, quickly; "speeches are not what we want, though it is not so much your fault. Girls just entering on the world are taught to suppose one man as charming as another, and as so many partners in a night's dance,—the last is always the finest and best."

Lucy's eyes widened. "I don't understand why you say this to me, Miss West."

"Why? You have wit enough to know. This is no little matter for acting. You should be told, that Gilbert's is not one of those cheap natures, to be treated in *that* way. His is no trifler's heart, but the noblest and most precious. He is *everything* to me. We are only two in this world. I don't know how to measure my words either; but I cannot look on, and see his happiness and our happiness, wrecked."

She spoke in such growing agitation, that Lucy found herself looking at her with

wonder and awe. She was a child in experience and training, as she had been told, though she had not a child's heart.

"Why should you think me so wicked?" she answered, "or so cruel? I have some honour, at least, and some faith."

"No, again it is not *that*. You think this some light matter, as girls do one of their wretched little flirtation triumphs. You would be pleased to see him coming here day after day, and be proud to show your friends that you have one, like him, interested in you, while *you* amuse yourself. Vanity enters into these things, as I know, in this wretched place, where a true heart is as rare as a real diamond on the necks of the creatures here."

Lucy, as we have seen, was quick and impetuous. "I say, what have I done?" said she, warmly, "or what am I going to do? What are these dangers? Why, he would smile if I were to tell him all this. I know his indulgent friendship for me."

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“*Friendship!*” repeated the other, with infinite scorn. “Is all this innocence or artfulness? You are not dull, but I do not know how to reach your heart. I know I am blunt; but leave *me* out of the matter. Think of him. Once he sets his mind on a thing, he casts his whole life and destiny with it. Only a day or two ago, he came to me in the most abject misery, and said he will leave this place and go back to the world. I was in such joy, for I knew that would be the saving of him. Well, a letter comes, and all is changed. He will stay here, and is in spirits again. And you talk of friendship! Do you take me for a child? I know I am an old maid, as they call it—always will be; and have only that one object to love or look to—only him! I have, indeed!”

She looked so wistfully, that Lucy—who, Mr. Dacres, said, enthusiastically, “had the fiery Dacres’ blood boiling through her little veins, sir,”—restrained that little im-

petuosity which was strong in her, and was quite softened, when a minute before she was inclined to do battle. She took the other's hands, and said, eagerly :

"Dear Miss West, now don't trouble your heart any longer, for I can tell you how it all stands. I would not see you so distressed for the whole world; and I can tell you how it is, in two words. That is ——" and she started, stopped, and remained silent, for she recollected the engagement she had made with Gilbert.

"Well?" said the other, her hard brow contracting.

"No," said Lucy, impetuously. "I cannot, at least not now. All I can say is, you may depend that I will behave with honour and true faith, and *as he wishes me to behave.*"

"Ah!" said Miss West, rising; "just what I expected; just what I warned him of. *Now*, I understand! Let him boast to me of his wisdom and experience, who would

place all his safety and happiness in the hands of a child! God help us, indeed! Ah, I see your game. Take care what you are going to do, or what you attempt. I warn you. Be cautious. I shall watch you from day to day, and if any ill or anything wrong comes of this business, you will repent it, child as you are, as sure as my name is Margaret West. You don't know me. Twenty years ago there was an adventuress who tried the same experiment with his trusting and generous nature; but I saved him. God gave me strength to save him and punish her. So take care!"

She spoke with an extraordinary fierceness and determination; the colour, even, had come into her pale dry cheek. But Lucy had plenty of spirit, "the old Dacres' spirit," if we like to call it so.

"What do you mean?" said Lucy, looking at her with astonishment and quivering lip. "You may warn me and watch me as much as you please. I invite it. I am not

in the least afraid. I am honest, and will look you in the face straight, at any time. If I am a child, as you are so fond of repeating, I have no child's heart. I have not sought you, nor your family; they have sought me. I could say who is childish to-day. Mr. West is above these unworthy suspicions and threats—yes, threats," added Lucy, very calmly; "if *he* were aware of what you have said to me——"

"He knows nothing—not a single word, as I live."

"If I were to tell him, you know perfectly the effect it would have. But I would disdain such a thing. Yet I do not know if it be my duty. You—a lady—to come here and threaten!"

"I—I mean it all for his sake. You cannot blind me. I know what is going on, and your father's schemes. We have friends in England."

"I will not listen to you," said Lucy, the tears almost forcing themselves to her eyes.

“Schemes! How *dare* you speak thus about *him*? But I despise it all. I court your watchings and warning, and shall behave exactly as suits my own dignity and honour. I shall make no terms. What if things *do* turn out so dreadfully as you suppose? I dare say they will. I cannot help it. Your brother will understand it all. I shall not be afraid to meet you, if you are bold enough to venture to bring me to account. There is a challenge, Miss West, for yours; and I must tell you I think it ungenerous of you to come in this way to our house, and speak so to a poor girl.”

“I told you I did not mean to offend or to hurt you, and, if I have done so, I am sorry for it; but still—I must warn you again that I am in earnest.”

Again the old flash of the Dacres was in Lucy's eyes. Miss Pringle had seen it often, and though she announced that she “would eradicate the seeds of temper,” she had failed, and had been clearly worsted in

some contests whose incidents were rather unseemly. The girl all but struck her own dress impatiently with her hand.

The other stood irresolute, her face working.

“I love my brother,” she said, “more than one should do in this miserable world, though he, perhaps, does not think it; and would not wish to see him suffer. But,” she continued, half sorrowfully, “things may take their course, until his eyes are opened, miserably—which assuredly they will be, one day.”

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE DEPARTURE.

OUR Lucy walked up and down a long time after that little scene—her first dramatic scene in life, and in which, too, she had acquitted herself with credit. She felt pride that she had proved herself equal to that bitter, wicked campaigner, who was double her size and strength. She was “a young thing,” and had a natural pride in her victory. But she knew nothing of the little hair-springs and cog-wheels and endless mechanism of the human heart, or she

would have felt that this assault, aimed really at her client, had made her more than ever his protector. Nay, she resented the ill-judged attempt to dispossess him, and advance another. Unconsciously, she found herself resisting what was so awkwardly being forced upon her.

Miss West went home, through the cold searching winds, which made her thin chest shrink and shiver. She found her brother still busy with his papers. She had not seen him all the morning. His eyes were bright; his forehead clear. The weather had no effect on *him*; yet she realised, with a pang, there had been a time when it deepened his melancholy. Now he was secure.

“My dear Margaret,” he said, cheerfully, “are you ready for a secret? I have been turning a plan over all last night and all this morning. You know I should have to go home next month to look after our business. Well, I have made up my mind

to go at once. It is only anticipating a little."

"Go at once," she repeated. "Good Heavens! why?"

"Oh, many whys and many wherefores. I have all sorts of things to do, though I shall be a very short time away, and—I shall go to-night. I may as well."

"Go to-night! What is the meaning of all this?" She spoke with a sort of hopelessness, for she knew it was idle opposing him.

"Because I shall be back the sooner. Don't you see? I shall go straight to Westtown—the old house."

"Why, you told me you could not endure to go within twenty miles of it—that your heart would sink—that you would die."

"Ah, *then*; yes. But it must be done at some time, and it is as well to get over such fancies. I'll make a plunge, Margery. The poor old place must be in an awful state of

decay. I'll get some clever fellow to go down to repair and beautify."

"I know the reason of this folly," she said, impatiently.

"No folly, indeed, if you knew all."

"If I knew all?"

"Ah, *you* know very little, Margery; forgive your brother for telling you so. Then, there is that poor Dacres and his affairs; he is such a muddler. I am convinced he is well off, this moment, if only some sensible man——"

"Like *you*. Oh, I lose all patience. You, indeed, going off to settle *their* business! They have finely entrapped you!"

"Now, Margaret," he said, coldly, "I warned you about this. At our last conversation on that subject, I told you I could hear no more. My mind is made up."

"But you *must* hear me, Gilbert. She no more cares for you than——All last night she was flirting, yes, like any ——"

“Like any girl,” he said, smiling, “with the lean Frenchmen there, I suppose. Just what I would expect, and like to see. Wherever she goes, she must be admired.”

“But—but——Oh, I see, it is *quite* hopeless. Nothing will change you; you are so infatuated. You will suffer for this.”

The anxious sisterly heart had checked itself—she could not bring herself to do more than hint about last night. She could not so madly break up his fool’s paradise.

“My dear Margery,” he added, kindly, “then do you come with me, to look after me, and keep me out of these follies which you think I am sure to fall into. We shall have a very pleasant little expedition together. There’s a plan now! What do you say?”

At first she gave a start of delight. Then the vision of the designing girl, left behind, unchecked, unwatched, rose before her, and she said, firmly,

“No, I must stay behind here.”

He tried to persuade, but she grew obstinate. Then he went on with his packing.

He walked down to Mr. Dacres, the schemes he had thus so lightly epitomised to *her*, floating in his head. He found Mr. Dacres cold physically, and morally desponding.

“ Ah! West, *here's* a hole to be put down in! The summer of a life, the prime of a man's days, slipping from him in a den. I shall die here, like a poisoned rat in a hole, as that poor beggar Swift said. What a mind, what a tongue, that fellow had! When I wanted to rake some scoundrel of a witness fore and aft, sir, I read over a page of the immortal boy before going into court. I *used* to read. Ah! my friend, those days are numbered with the past. Well, sir, what's the best news with you? ”

“ Why, I called in to tell you that I am going away for a short time.”

"The deuce you are!" said Mr. Dacres, turning on him sharply, as he would on a witness suddenly discovered to be hostile. "What's that for, Mr. West?"

"I have mapped out the whole thing," said the other, "and I want a little information from you."

Then he proceeded to unfold his plans—the restoration of the family place—and added—

"You are very clever, but, I think, not the man exactly to deal with these sharks and Jews. I am accustomed to business, and a friend could make better terms. We might get you quite free, and start you fair again."

Dacres replied, with deep emotion, "West, you've a real fine nature, and a delicate one, which I like better. I am not, indeed, up to these things. Would I were going with you! To be sure—yes! Why couldn't we start together?"

"That would destroy everything," said

Mr. West, firmly. "No! And there's Sir John Trotter; I am sure I could make out people that know him."

"Oh! my dear fellow, this overpowers me. Why, how shall I ever——"

"No thanks, To tell you the truth, this is not so much for you——"

"Ah! I know it is not," said the other, slyly. "Don't tell me, my boy! Don't. And she deserves it—a diamond fit for a Jew. The wealth of Araby spread out at her feet, gold, incense, and myrrh, Golconda, and the rest of it—not one *bit* too much. She deserves it all, every halfpenny."

"I know," said Mr. West, interrupting these paternal raptures. "And I must bind you, most solemnly, not to breathe a word to *her*. I make this a point, and a solemn condition."

"Will you have an affidavit?" said Mr. Dacres, with alacrity; "any one that's binding on my conscience; kiss the book, sir. Hush! by the powers, here she is; not

a word. It will only fetter and constrain her, the dear child! Well, Lulu, pet, how is poor mamma? Poor Mrs. D., sir, has a touch of the browns, sir; this blackguard weather always brings it to her. Heaven forgive me! I haven't seen her since morning." And, with great delicacy, Mr. Dacres withdrew.

Lucy started when she saw the brother whose sister had visited her in the morning. Mr. West's bright face, however, and cordial manner relieved her.

"I hope you enjoyed yourself last night, and always will when I am away."

Again she started. She had told him all.

"Going away? Why, what is the reason? Oh, you are not angry——"

"Angry," he said, smiling. "No, I *must* go on family business. I shall not be long, so you will have a short holiday. And, now, will you promise me one thing—two things? First, to write to me very often."

"Indeed I shall," said she; "every day, if you wish."

“Dear, no. Only when you have something to tell me—how you are getting on; how you are amusing yourself. And that brings me to my second request, that you *do* amuse yourself; see people you like; go to parties—what are called by courtesy, parties—as much as you can; just as if, in short——”

“I know what you mean, perfectly,” said Lucy, with her little air of confidence. “I remember our agreement. You are really *noble*, I see it now,” she said, with some colour. “And if I were to meet some soul who had suffered a great deal, and tried to to soothe and comfort, to distract their thoughts, to listen to them, you would not think——”

“Just what I would wish you to do, and what I would expect from the gentle nature of Lucy Dacres.”

“But if I spoke kindly to him——”

“*Him?*” repeated Mr. West, a little absently.

“Yes; to some poor wanderer over the

face of the earth, like the Wandering Jew, would *you* say I was a flirt ? ”

“No, my dear child,” said he, smiling. “But where are these Jews and helpless creatures to come from ? I dare say I shall see more Jews than you. Ah ! I know ! Tell me, has my sister been with you ? ”

Lucy looked confused, down on the ground. What sagacity and penetration he had ! She admired him now. He rose up in some agitation.

“I knew this ; I suspected this. This is what I shall leave behind. But do not mind her ; she means well, poor soul. It is all her love for me, which I do not deserve. She is indiscreet, soured if you like, and takes what she thinks to be the best way to advance my interest. I am sorry for this, deeply. She thinks the old-fashioned style to be the right way—a girl to be moping in a corner. Do not mind her. Promise me. Recollect, you are to be free to *teach* yourself to have and regard for me. And if

# THE DEPARTURE.

you find," he said, a little anxiously, "do you miss me——"

"O, but I shall. You are so kind and so generous!" said Lucy, smiling, "and I promise you everything."

He looked at her with great interest, and took her hand.

"I shall be back very soon," he said, "and you will know who is your friend——" And if there is any little difficulty, I shall have a breezy passage to London, which is what I like. They shall not hinder a sailor. Good-bye, dear Lucy. Remember, write pretty often, and be in the humour, and I will try to amuse yourself."

Lucy's face quite fell as she was losing her friend. "And so unkindly," she said, "and so unkindly of you."

He went down the stairs, and said, "What man but might have been a thing? But I am right. I am a game. I can see that value in me."

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you find," he said, a little anxiously, "that you *miss* me——"

"O, but I shall. You are so noble and so generous!" said Lucy, enthusiastically. "and I promise you everything."

He looked at her with great interest, and took her hand.

"I shall be back very soon. Now, you know who is your friend—your true friend. And if there is any little difficulty——We shall have a breezy passage to-day; but that is what I like. They should have made me a sailor. Good-bye, dearest Lucy. Remember, write pretty often when you are in the humour, and, above all things, *amuse* yourself."

Lucy's face quite fell as she thought of losing her friend. "It is so sudden," she said, "and so unkind of you!"

He went down the stairs, a little troubled. "What man but myself would do such a thing? But I am right. It is a bold game. I can see she wants me to stay.

I.

T

Yes. She shall be perfectly free. She shall come to me, not I to her." The ugly thought, which he disliked, was still before him. "Old enough to be her father."

His foot was on the last step, when a handsome man—Spanish-looking—well-dressed, distinguished, passed him with a bow, and went upstairs. Mr. West looked after him, wondering. Then he looked up at the window. Lulu was waving her hand to him energetically, and his countenance cleared again in a moment. But the waving was abruptly interrupted, and the bright figure of "Lulu" darted away from the window.

Alas! all that night, in the dull-lit cabin, when the steamer was plunging, rocking, creaking, heaving, groaning, roaring, that interrupted salutation would come back on him, and make him uneasy with many a pang.

END OF VOL I.

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